Valley Voice

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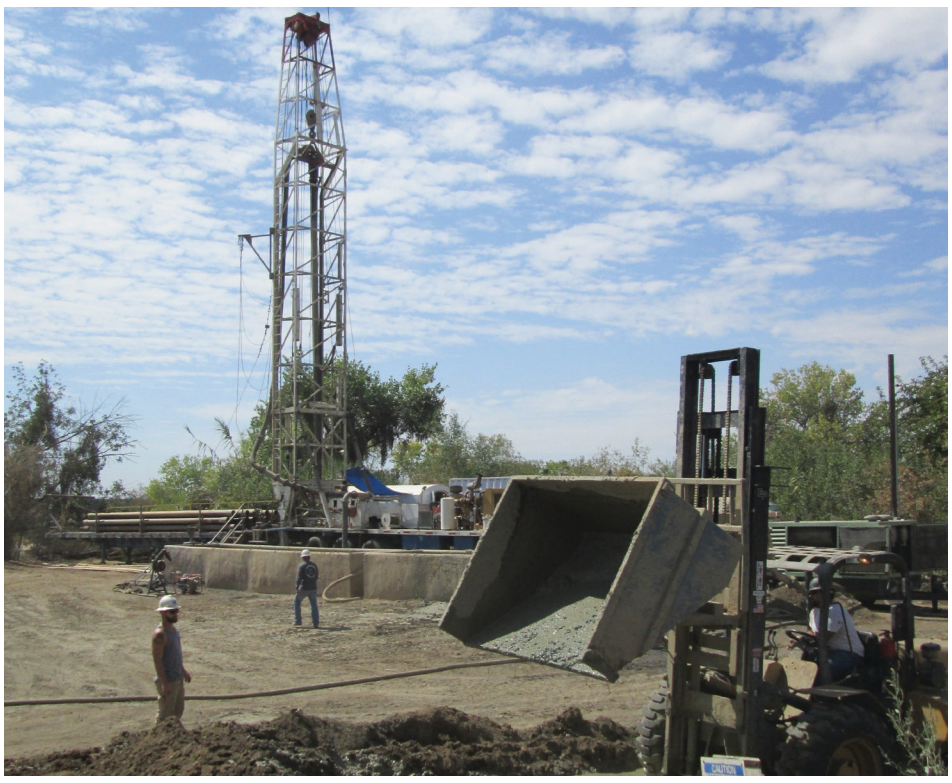

A new well drilled near Porterville will undergo performance tests before decisions are made as to how it will help aide the drought-stricken region. Nancy Vigran/Valley Voice

Purpose of New South Valley Well Has Raised Some Questions

Nancy Vigran

Recent developments involving Porterville, Tulare County and California's Office of Emergency Services have left the future of a new well drilled near city limits in question.

What seemed to be a breakdown in communication had caused a sudden halt to the joint venture that could provide a permanent solution for some South Valley residents whose wells have dried up.

Until recently Tulare County and Porterville were working closely together in efforts to not only provide a temporary source of water to hundreds of county residences in the area, but also toward the common goal of a more permanent solution.

The county was able to obtain state emergency funding to drill a new well just outside of Porterville city limits. Drilling began in late August and is now complete. Only water testing, the electricity and some additional infrastructure to hook-up the well is left to be done. The intention was for the well to be linked into the city's water system.

But in November that came to a standstill. State officials decided it would be in the county's best interest to develop a water filling station at the new well site, where water could

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Accusations Fly During Hanford Council Meeting, Mayoral Vote

Catherine Doe

Tensions ran high at the December 1 Hanford City Council meeting as it was standing-room-only in anticipation of a new mayor and vice-mayor being voted into office. According to the city charter a reorganization of the council needs to take place every year at the first meeting in December. After some spirited public comments, and the council members' vote, the final winners were Justin Mendes for mayor and Francisco Ramirez for vice-mayor. After outgoing mayor Russ Curry did the ceremonial handing over of the gavel, the council had a short recess to so family and friends could congratulate the new officers.

Before the vote took place Glenda Dyer said during public comment that "it has been a wild ride this year." She said that she hoped that the gang of three would break up and "come to their senses." The gang of three she was referring to was Council members Gary Pannett, Justin Mendes and Francisco Ramirez. Dyer felt with certainty that Mendes would be voted in as the next mayor and said that she would be at the meetings to watch how he votes. She said that Mendes claims to be a conservative but that his vote on the council was to raise taxes. "You can't have it both ways. That's not conservative."

Bob Ramos approached the podium for public comment and claimed that a former council member, Dave Thomas, called him to say he had inside information on who was going to be voted in for mayor and vice-mayor. Ramos said that, according to Thomas, with the full approval of the council it will be 3-2 Mendes for mayor and Ramirez for vice-mayor.

"It's a done deal," Ramos said that Pannett said.

He said that all of Thomas' information was leaked to him by Pannett.

On hearing Ramos' charges of leaking information, Pannett burst into

HANFORD continued on **9 »**

Former mayor Russ Curry handing over the gavel to new mayor Justin Mendes. Catherine Doe/Valley Voice

Kings County Jail Expansion Marks Change in Fighting Crime

Dave Adalian

Kings County Sheriff Dave Robinson believes building a bigger jail can lead to fewer people ending up behind bars, and the county and state are going to spend $21 million to find out if he's right.

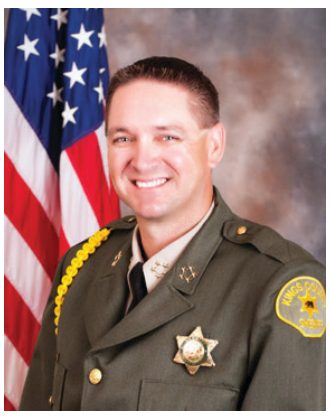
When the US Supreme Court ruled in 2011, that intense overcrowding and a wide lack of health services in state prisons amounted to cruel and unusual punishment, California's lawmakers decided to solve the problem with the Public Safety Realignment Act (PSRA) returning about one-third of the inmates it released back to the counties where they were convicted. It also passed a pair of massive jail construction finance packages that Kings County capitalized on to fund a $41-million, 252-bed expansion of the Kings County Jail scheduled to finish around May of 2016.

A Space Where People Can Help

As soon as that project is complete, work will begin on a second expansion, one that will add 24 more beds, all of them part of a new mental health housing unit. It will also include a day reporting center and space for classes and drug-treatment programs, all in keeping with the other intent of the PSRA, stopping criminals from committing new crimes when they're released.

"The idea of the project is to create a space where people can help rehabilitate the offenders," Robinson said.

"The goal is to reduce recidivism through different programs. There'll be space so we can do anger management classes, addiction counseling."



David Robinson, Sheriff-Coroner-Public Administrator

The Sheriff's Department will not be alone in operating the facility, which should be open in 2017. Its partners include Kings County Behavioral Heath Services and the Kings County Probation Department, as well as a host of smaller agencies.

A Change in Thinking

Attempting to address the reasons criminals commit crimes, said Robinson, represents a new way law enforcement is approaching its job.

"I think historically, in the past there was more focus on the punishment, this much time in prison, don't commit any more crimes," said Robinson. "The times have definitely changed. We've evolved over the years. Where you pay a fine or spend time in jail, now we're focused on getting people to stop committing those crimes."

The area where he believes the agencies involved in this new approach can make the greatest impact is in treating drug addiction, removing the motive driving many repeat offenders.

"With the drug problems, methamphetamine, prescription pills, heroin, you have to have that aspect of getting people off drugs," Robinson said. "There are other reasons, but that's the biggest cause."

Following at a close second is mental illness, and the problem is multiplied when the two combine. By treating those two root causes, Robinson believes everyone in the community will benefit.

"When you mix drugs and mental illness, it's a time-bomb," he said. "The more we can do to get something started when they come through our doors, the better off we'll be. Hopefully, we can divert them to a program, or at least find a way they can continue treatment."

Cutting Crime and the Bottom Line

If the new approach works, it will both reduce the number of people serving time and eliminate the cost of incarcerating them.

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FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

The Times They Have A Changed

Some milestones in life seem daunting until you realize, usually during them, that the anticipation of the moment was worse than the moment itself. Childbirth springs to mind, as do pre-wedding jitters. One's first driving test. A first day on the job or on campus. What we do, customarily, is get through it--whatever "it" is.

Sometimes, though, a defining moment appears unanticipated.

I experienced three over the recent Thanksgiving break. My wife and I, along with our youngest son and younger daughter, traveled to Eugene, Oregon to celebrate the holiday with our oldest child and older daughter.

As you may know, Oregon recently legalized the recreational use of marijuana. A green neon cross designates the places where pot is sold--my wife and I saw several on a long cross-town ramble--and one merely furnishes proof of being at least 21 years old before the transaction occurs. There are, apparently, many varieties to choose from--according to our youngest son. I--having smoked more than a fair share in my salad days, and having long since given it up--was mildly curious. Our son, however, was keen to take advantage of this new opportunity. He wanted, he said, the strongest stuff he could buy--so out he bicycled, into a rainy night, seeking the closest dispensary.

He failed, thereby obviating his need of it.

But the first moment came a few nights later. Having finally succeeded, our son showed us his purchases (one can scarcely say "stash" in these circumstances) and proceeded directly to the front porch to smoke them in plain sight. The sky did not fall. The world did not end. Good for you, Oregon. If nothing else, I hope the whole thing is a shot in the arm for your tax base.

Later that night, as we sat talking with our kids and their friends, the topic of Tinder came up. I still don't know what Tinder is, so I take their word that it's a dating website. That might be putting it mildly, but I wouldn't know--my wife and I have been married longer than Christ was alive. The thing is, though, when Grinder tangentially entered the conversation, the kids were dismayed. Grinder, according to them, is the gay equivalent of Tinder. This may have put me even further out to sea, but the kids were firmly grounded. Why, they wondered, couldn't there just be one website for everyone?

There's a moment for you. Tom Brokaw can have his ridiculous "Greatest Generation." I say ridiculous because to my mind the greatness of the United States is that you could plug any of our generations into the Depression and World War II and arrive at the same result. The greatness lies not with the generation, but with the country. So I'll take the kids' generation. Sure, they may be stoned--but they're the future. And they're tolerant.

If only we could get them to vote!

The reason we went to Eugene for Thanksgiving--as opposed to hosting it here ourselves--is that our oldest bought himself a house there. Ten years ago he enrolled at the University of Oregon; he may have yet to finish, it's true, but he leapfrogged the diploma and bought a house. And while I prefer he would graduate, I'm proud of this development. In some ways, it even obviates the need of a degree.

Sitting in his house, sharing the Thanksgiving dinner, I realized that the torch had been passed. In 2013, our older daughter was married, but that was something we hosted--and more properly felt like an event in her life. But at Thanksgiving we were guests. I didn't so much as open a can of cranberry sauce.

I have seen the future, and it is doable.

— Joseph Oldenbourg

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Political Fix

Catherine Doe

Tulare County Supervisor Election For District 1 Gets Even More Crowded

When I first reported on the Tulare County Board of Supervisors District 1 race back in October, I neglected to mention that Visalia Unified School District Board member Jim Qualls was also running. Since October another contender has thrown his hat in the ring, Angel Galvez of Exeter. That makes a total of five candidates running for Supervisor Allen Ishida's district. Mr. Ishida decided not to defend his seat, opting instead to run for governor of California.

Four of the candidates seem equally qualified, and what the youngest candidate lacks in experience, he makes up for in money. Kuyler Crocker, a 28-year-old from Strathmore, has already raised $16,825 for his campaign and the support of Mr. Ishida. The other four contenders haven't reported any fundraising but have impressive resumes.

Vincent Salinas was on the Visalia City Planning Commission for 11 years. Ted Macaulay was mayor of Exeter for 12 years, and Mr. Qualls has been a well-respected Visalia Unified Board District member on and off since 1989. Though his current school board term runs to 2018, he didn't want to pass on the opportunity to run for an open seat.

The newest entrant into the District 1 race is Mr. Galvez. When I mentioned to Mr. Galvez it was going to be a crowded field he said, "Yes, I'm aware of all the three (Mr. Qualls was again forgotten). I have a strong work ethic which I hope will be transparent to the voters. I also have a diverse set of supporters. I agree that it will be an interesting election."

Mr. Galvez is probably the least known, so has the steepest hill to climb in getting elected. He was born in Tulare and was raised in the Woodville Labor Camp by migrant parents. At the age of 18 he moved to Fresno, and attended Fresno City College, where he received his Associates Degree in Liberal Studies. He then transferred to Fresno State, where he earned a Bachelor's Degree in Criminology.

While going to school he worked in social and behavioral health services in the County of Fresno but ended up in the banking business. In 2002, Mr. Galvez managed Allied Home Mortgage, a Texas-based corporation, where he led a seven year career in finance and investments. He earned his banking and real estate credentials as well, attending foreign graduate programs in Bogota, Colombia and Mito, Japan.

In 2006, Mr. Galvez returned home and began a career with the Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency, Mental Health Branch. He also attended Fresno Pacific University and earned his Master of Arts in Organizational Leaders Studies. Mr. Angel Galvez currently lives in Exeter with his wife and children.

Candidates will file their official declaration to run for office starting January 1, 2016. Right now candidates are filing their financial forms so they can start fundraising.

Who Is Out To Get Councilman Francisco Ramirez?

Francisco Ramirez is a first-term Hanford City Council member who has been besieged since August by an army of "well funded and well organized" constituents who call themselves, "Residents of Hanford working for a better tomorrow."

Or is this just an army of two?

Mr. Ramirez was swept into office on an anti Measure S position that would have raised Hanford's sales tax. He beat out incumbent Lou Martinez for District D in the November 2014 election. A year later, it seems the same people who campaigned for a Ramirez victory want him gone.

The anonymous attacks have come from a large number of Hanford residents in the form of letters, postcards and phone calls, all of which curiously seem to share the same computer and blocked telephone number.

"Restricted" popped up on my phone's screen a few weeks ago. I never answer restricted numbers, but I've had to start since working on an article involving the Tulare County Sheriff's Department. I discovered in the last two months that Edison repair people and the Tulare County Sheriff's Department only make calls using restricted numbers so crazy people like me don't call them back.

This time the questionable caller was on the other end of the line. He said his name was Joe Gomez, which I guess is the Mexican equivalent to John Smith. He wanted to mail me a strange letter he received concerning Mr. Ramirez. Mr. Gomez, who said he had no idea why a regular guy like him would get such a letter, read parts of it to me over the phone. The letter, which referred to Mr. Ramirez as being of questionable character and engaging in unethical conduct, said a group of concerned citizens had hired a private investigator and were handing over the findings, none of which were divulged, to the proper authorities. But the main gist of the letter was a demand that Councilman Ramirez resign his seat on the Hanford City Council immediately and stop all public appearances.

The letter made a point of saying, "this is not personal."

Mr. Gomez recited a long list of everything wrong with Mr. Ramirez, describing him as a hustler and dishonest. But when I posed a difficult question I was "accidently" disconnected mid-sentence. I quickly called Mr. Gomez back using the phone number I pressured him into giving me at the beginning of our conversation, but it was a disconnected number.

Two days later I received the actual letter in an envelope with no return address and signed by a group I am fairly certain does not exist. I also received a mass produced postcard that said "Councilman Francisco Ramirez, suspect-victim-witness, or just another CORRUPT POLITICIAN."

The letter and postcard were an encore of a failed production put on three month ago.

During the August 18 Hanford City Council meeting, Mayor Russ Curry read four "constituents'" letters out loud that accused Mr. Ramirez of lying about

POLITICAL FIX continued on **13 »**

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Porterville College Fire Academy Holds Firefighter 1 Class #32 Academy Graduation

Several cadets were honored during graduation ceremonies for the Porterville College 2015 Firefighter 1 Academy Class #32, held in the PC gymnasium in November.

Cadets Robert T. Hernandez and Coy O. Farnsworth were recognized for serving as the class "Battalion Chiefs". On top of completing all other training and study required of Fire Academy cadets, the class battalion chiefs assumes the additional responsibility of maintaining class decorum, lining the class up for inspection each day, assigning equipment set-up tasks, leading the class in all classroom and field training activities, and assisting the instructional staff as needed. Hernandez is currently a reserve for Tulare County Fire Department. Farnsworth is a full-time firefighter for City of Porterville.

Recognition was also given to five cadets for serving as "Company Captains" under

Hernandez and Farnsworth. They are Erick Cendejas, Joshua Holden, Adam N. Martinez, Austin M. Morales and Shawn M. Trocke.

Each year, by secret ballot, the cadets select a class member who they felt went "above and beyond the call of duty" in assisting others with hands-on skills practice, classroom study or in other ways during the difficult and rigorous 15 week academy. Alexander J. Elizondo was overwhelmingly selected for the "Class Leadership" award by his fellow cadets.

Per State Fire Marshal rules, all cadets in our SFM Accredited Fire Academy must score at least 80% on each written examination and there is much competition among cadets to have the highest overall score at the end of the academy. This is a unique year, receiving the "Top Score" award this year are two cadets: Elizondo and Farnsworth with an overall score of 98.11%.

Caleb Wieland, Elizondo and Santiago G. Cardenas were given the "Volunteer Award" for their dedication to organizing and maintaining the fire academy trailers and equipment. Farnsworth was given the "Can do, Sir Award" for his willingness and dedication to assist the staff and cadets during the course of the fire academy.

Congratulations to the full Porterville College Fire Academy Class #32: John Alvarado, Pete Baga, Chad Branch, Santiago Cardenas, Joey Carrillo, Erick Cendejas, Alexander Elizondo, Coy Farnsworth, David Flores, Robert Hernandez, Joshua Holden, Dylan Martin, Adam Martinez, Anthony Martinez, Austin Morales, Ryan Pavone, Joe Perez, Juan Rodriguez, Juan Roman, Shamakh Saleh, Jesse Sanchez, Brandon Taylor, Shawn Trocke, Timothy Weatherly and Caleb Wieland.

Tulare County Sheriff's Department Breaks Ag Crime Ring

Catherine Doe

Tulare County Sheriff's Department held a press a press conference on November 20 to announce that it had broken up a dairy crime ring. The ring is responsible for multiple thefts from dairies in Tulare, Tipton and Hanford over the course of months or maybe a year.

"If you are stealing livestock in Tulare County we will put every resource available to make sure you are put behind bars," announced Tulare County Sheriff Boudreaux.

The sheriff's department responded to the rise in agricultural crimes by increasing their Ag Crimes Unit to six detectives and one sergeant.

The unit conducted a six-week investigation from October 1 through November 17 into ongoing thefts of powdered milk and feed supplements for dairy calves. One victim contacted the Ag Crimes Unit to advise several bags of powdered milk had been stolen from inside a milk barn.

Tulare County Sheriff Boudreaux with his Ag Crimes Unit during a press conference. Catherine Doe/Valley Voice

Ag Crimes Unit detectives began utilizing equipment to identify and catch the suspects. During the next several weeks, the suspects returned multiple times, stealing several bags each trip. The total loss was $15,000 worth of mainly powdered milk and some additional feed supplements.

Detectives used innovative investigation techniques and equipment to identify the suspects who were very familiar with the layout of the dairy and knowledgeable in how to avoid detection. The sergeant could not disclose their investigative techniques but did say it utilized the sheriff department's plane.

After a two-week surveillance on the dairy, a suspect was caught in the act of stealing bags of powdered milk. The suspect, Juan Berra, was taken into custody on November 17. Detectives returned to his residence and served a search warrant for the stolen property. While at Berra's residence, seven stolen calves were located locked inside a small covered patio style laundry room. The enclosure did not have water or food and an extra charge of animal cruelty may be added to the charge of grand theft. The calves were determined to have been stolen from Gold Star Calf Ranch and were returned to their owner.

Through the investigation, a second suspect, Raul Martinez, was identified as committing the crimes with Berra, his cousin. Martinez admitted to stealing the milk as well as the calves. He also admitted to involvement in a theft of 10 calves from a separate crime which occurred in June in the Tulare area.

Martinez, in an effort to cooperate with law enforcement, led detectives to two locations that had purchased the stolen goods. Five stolen cows and some of the stolen powdered milk were found at the first location outside of Tulare. It was determined that these suspects or others were running their own calf operations and raising them for beef or selling the untagged calves back to unsuspecting dairies. Most of the calves were clearly tagged by the owner-dairy and obviously stolen, but a few were not. No arrests were made at this location.

Information was obtained about another location in Kings County that had a large amount of the stolen property present. A search warrant was served at a calf ranch in the area of Iona and 12th Avenue, in Hanford. During the search, 156 bags of stolen powdered milk and other supplements were located at this site. The stolen property located took five trucks to transport back to the victim. Two suspects, Jose Barojas of Hanford and Isidro Barojas of Lemoore, were identified as receiving stolen property at this location and arrested. The sheriff's department deemed that the powdered milk, supplements and medications were sold to people leaving orders and were also used to feed the stolen calves.

The sheriff's department knows that the theft ring has been going on for three or four months, but suspects it has gone on much longer. They could not officially identify who was buying the stolen goods but said that some buyers were home-based businesses. The suspected buyers would place orders through the crime ring and then receive the stolen calves, food and supplements at much reduced price. The ring has been confined to Tulare and Kings County.

Two suspects are still at large but the department has some leads. Those suspected of stealing the calves and powdered milk are known to be very familiar with the operations of a dairy but it was not disclosed if they were dairy employees. A few days after birth, calves are separated from the hustle and bustle of the dairy where they are more susceptible to being stolen.

This six-week investigation resulted in the arrest of four suspects. Three search warrants were served in two counties, and $14,465 worth of powdered milk and supplements, and $8,400 worth of recovered stolen cattle for a total recovery of $22,865 worth of stolen property were claimed.

The Tulare County Sheriff's Department has requested that anyone with information is encouraged to call the department at (559)733-6218 or send anonymous information by sending a text or email to TCSO@tipnow.com, or call (559) 725-4194.

WHC Planning New Bus Routes, Connecting Students with Existing Routes in Kings, Fresno Counties

In an effort to make it easier for students to get to campus, West Hills Community College district is in talks with transportation officials in Fresno County to create new bus routes and to connect students with already existing routes in both Fresno and Kings County.

"The goal is to try to make this happen by the time our Spring Semester begins on Jan. 11, 2016," said Ken Stoppenbrink, WHCCD Deputy Chancellor. "If all goes well, we'll roll out the transportation plan and specific schedules in December."

Many of the bus routes are already in place so adding more stops and adjusting some schedules is all that needs to be done, Stoppenbrink said. "There are just a couple of routes where we may have to provide van service," he said. "We're working out those details now."

Fresno County has indicated a willingness to start a new route to service students in Kerman, San Joaquin, Tranquillity and Mendota, stopping at the North District Center, Firebaugh, which is West Hills College's educational center there.

Funding would come from several grants recently provided to both counties and the college, designed to improve access to higher education and increase the use of rural transportation systems. "This program would help boost ridership for the two counties and give our students better access to the campus nearest them," Stoppenbrink said.

Analysis will be conducted to determine how to serve students in Avenal with buses or vans going directly to both college campuses in Lemoore and Coalinga from Kings and Fresno counties.

In Kings County, an effort is also being made to make students more aware of the routes that already exist. Kings County currently provides half service to the Lemoore campus.

Times and frequency of the various routes is still under review but will be released in the coming weeks.

High-Speed Rail Authority Selects HNTB for Work in Northern California

The California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) Board of Directors today approved the awarding of a contract to conduct preliminary engineering and environmental services for the San Francisco to San Jose and San Jose to Merced project sections to HNTB Corporation (HNTB). The two project sections extend approximately 135 miles and will connect the Bay Area to the Central Valley.

"Awarding this contract is an essential piece to help us move forward in bringing high-speed rail to the Bay Area," said Authority CEO Jeff Morales. "HNTB is an experienced firm that has the resources and expertise to complete the work required to meet our goal of environmental clearance in the region by 2017."

HNTB will assist the Authority in further defining and environmentally clearing high-speed rail blended operations along the Caltrain Corridor from 4th and King Streets in San Francisco to the Tamien Station in San Jose. They are also tasked to environmentally clear a high-speed rail alignment between San Jose to the Central Valley Wye. Environmental clearance in both project sections is scheduled to be completed by December 2017. The contract is for a three-year period at a cost of $36 million.

To obtain the Authority's aggressive 30 percent goal for Small Business participation, HNTB has a commitment of 31.2 percent from 21 Small and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises. HNTB Corporation is an employee-owned, national firm with more than 100 years of experience providing infrastructure solutions through the application of engineering, architecture, planning and management services.

The San Francisco to San Jose Project Section is approximately 51 miles between the 4th and King St. Station in San Francisco and Caltrain's Tamien Station in San Jose. The San Jose to Merced Project Section is approximately 84 miles and travels from the Caltrain San Jose Diridon Station to the western limit of the Central Valley Wye at the intersection of Carlucci Road and Henry Miller Avenue, approximately nine miles northeast of Los Banos in Merced County.

CSET Receives Donation from CalWater

Community Services Employment Training (CSET) has been awarded a $2,500 donation from California Water Service (Cal Water). The donation will help maintain CSET's mission to inspire Tulare County youth, families, and the community to achieve self-reliance.

To recognize its support of CSET's community efforts, Cal Water will host a check presentation ceremony on Tuesday, November 24 at its offices located at 216 N. Valley Oaks Dr. in Visalia, CA. The ceremony will take place at 9:00 a.m.

"We are very appreciative of Cal Water's generosity and support of our mission to encourage and inspire our community," said Mary Alice Escarsega-Fechner, CSET's Executive Director. "This is a prime example of community partners working together to make a difference in the lives of many people."

Cal Water provides potable domestic water to residents of Visalia and surrounding communities. These residents can also utilize CSET programs including energy assistance, weatherization, free tax preparation, and other services. There is also a First Time Homebuyer program that is available only to residents of Visalia.

Cal Water offers assistance to its customers through a variety of programs, including low-income rate assistance, free water-efficient sprinkler heads, and rebates for water-efficient home appliances and turf replacement.

Cal Water serves about 132,200 people through 43,400 service connections in its Visalia service area. The company has provided water service to the people of Visalia since 1927. Additional information may be obtained online at www.calwater.com.

If you have any questions regarding the check ceremony event, please contact Jeff Forbes via phone at (559) 732-4194 or email at jeff.forbes@cset.org.

Farm Bureau Awards $4,500 in Garden Grants to Local Schools

Every year, Tulare County Farm Bureau's education committee accepts applications from area schools who want to create or maintain gardens on their campuses. This fall, the education committee awarded grants to 16 schools throughout Tulare County.

Schools may apply for a $250 renewal grant if they have an existing garden, or for a $500 grant towards the creation of a new garden. This year's renewal grant recipients are: Alice G. Mulcahy Middle School in Tulare, Bartlett Middle School in Porterville, Eleanor Roosevelt Community Learning Center in Visalia, FJ White Learning Center in Woodlake, Fairview Elementary in Visalia, Hurley Elementary in Visalia, Liberty School in Tulare, Linwood Elementary in Visalia, Pioneer Middle School in Porterville, Rocky Hill Elementary in Exeter, Saucelito Elementary in Terra Bella, St. Aloysius School in Tulare, St. Paul's School in Visalia, and Valley Life Charter Oak in Visalia.

New garden grant recipients are: Monache High School in Porterville and Palo Verde School in Tulare.

The schools were presented with their grant checks at Farm Bureau's Superintendent's Breakfast on November 19 at Visalia Technical Early College High School in Visalia. Garden grant recipients also have an array of resources they can access from the Tulare County Farm Bureau including garden workshops and plant giveaways held twice a year for Farm Bureau sponsored gardens.

At any time, teachers may request a visit from the TCFB Beyond-the-Farm trailer; resources from the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom; and gardening advice from the UC Master Gardeners.

Tulare County is the leading dairy county in the nation and a top agricultural producer in California. The Tulare County Farm Bureau represents more than 2,000 family farmers and is dedicated to promoting and enhancing the viability of Tulare County agriculture on behalf of its membership.

Agriculture

Next Step Toward Federal Milk Order Will Come in 2016

Ching Lee, CFBF

After 40 days and hundreds of hours of testimony, the U.S. Department of Agriculture hearing on establishing a federal milk marketing order for California concluded last week.

Now California dairy farmers will have months, possibly up to a year, to wait for USDA to issue an initial recommended decision on the hearing. And then it'll be several more months after that before they could vote on a final USDA decision that lays out how a federal milk marketing order would operate in the state. A two-thirds majority of California producers is needed to implement the order.

California dairy farmers seek to join the federal order because they say the existing state milk pricing system underpays them, specifically on milk used to manufacture cheese, compared to prices paid under the federal order.

The next five to six months are expected to be consumed by procedural matters: USDA completing the hearing transcript and making that available; interested parties filing suggested corrections to the transcript; and hearing participants filing post-hearing briefs, including any replies to those briefs. USDA will then use the entire hearing record to make a recommended decision.

Considering the volume of information presented during the hearing, with 149 testimonies and 194 exhibits entered into the record, hearing observers say they expect it will take USDA six months or longer to issue an initial decision.

"We would love to see a final decision announced by the end of 2016, but I think that's an ambitious goal," said Rob Vandenheuvel, general manager of the Milk Producers Council.

Having followed the hearing from beginning to end and testified as a witness, Vandenheuvel described the process as "all fairly predictable." That is, California dairy farmers and their advocates testified in support of the proposal by the state's three large dairy cooperatives—California Dairies Inc., Dairy Farmers of America and Land O'Lakes—while processors sided with the proposal by the Dairy Institute of California.

"The common word was that (producers) wanted to be on a level playing field with the rest of the country. From there, they all had their unique story to tell," Annie AcMoody, director of economic analysis for Western United Dairymen, said of the more than 30 dairy farmers who testified in the hearing.

After several unsuccessful attempts to change the state's milk pricing system to be more in line with the federal order—through hearings with the California Department of Food and Agriculture and proposed legislation—AcMoody said this USDA hearing represented farmers' final effort and "getting it right was really clear on all the parties that participated."

Now that a lengthy hearing has ended to consider a proposed federal milk marketing order for California, the U.S. Department of Agriculture will review the hearing record and issue an initial recommended decision. Kathy Coatney/CFBF

"What came through clearly in the testimony is that we're really at a turning point here," said Lynne McBride, executive director of the California Dairy Campaign. "A lot of lifelong dairy producers are questioning what the future holds in our state, given the lack of profitability. They want to be paid a price that's fair compared to other states, and the adoption of the cooperatives' proposal would do that."

Tulare County dairy farmer Tom Barcellos, who testified during the last week of the hearing, said while he wishes more producers had participated, he felt those who did represented a "good cross-section" of California's dairy sector—from small to large dairies, those with Holstein herds versus Jersey herds, and those who own quota versus those who don't.

Barcellos focused his testimony on the importance of maintaining the current quota system, which the cooperatives' proposal does. Many farmers have said that a California federal order that does not preserve quota—with an estimated value of more than $1 billion—would be a deal-breaker and they would not vote for it.

"It's a substantial amount of money for a lot of people," Barcellos said. "It's the difference between them being profitable and not being profitable."

As a dairy farmer who also operates a processing facility, Fresno-based Producers Dairy, Richard Shehadey said he not only wants to preserve quota but also the current quota exemption given to producer-handlers for a portion of their Class 1 milk that does not have to be part of the California milk pool.

There are four producer-handlers in the state that hold this quota exemption: Producers Dairy, Foster Dairy, Rockview and Hollandia Dairy. They had their own proposal that focused

MILK continued on **8 »**

Agriculture

Net Metering: Groups Say New Rules Must Work for Ag

Christine Souza, CFBF

With a deadline to create new net energy metering rules for California fast approaching, agricultural organizations have urged state utility regulators to consider the unique characteristics of farm and ranch customers in developing new net-metering contracts.

Net metering allows people who have installed renewable-energy facilities to receive a financial credit for power generated by those facilities that is fed back to the utility company. The credit is applied to a customer's energy bill.

A state law that took effect in 2013 requires the California Public Utilities Commission to finalize new net-metering rules by Dec. 31. The existing program is slated to end when the capacity of net-metered generation exceeds 5 percent of a utility's electricity demand or July 1, 2017—whichever comes first—so the CPUC is finalizing rules that would govern net metering after that.

In a letter to the commission, 35 agricultural groups outlined aspects of the program they consider "critical" for farmers and ranchers participating in net metering: meter aggregation, annual true-ups, long-term program certainty and the ease and affordability of connecting power facilities to the electrical grid.

Karen Norene Mills of the California Farm Bureau Federation, one of the groups that signed the letter, said it culminated an 18-month proceeding during which CFBF submitted a variety of documents focused on maintaining net metering for farms and ranches.

"It has been important to get agriculture's views highlighted, to ensure the new rules don't eliminate the benefits for agriculture," said Mills, who is associate counsel and director of public utilities for CFBF.

A key element of the program, Mills said, is called aggregated net-energy metering, which allows generation from one solar installation to be credited to more than one meter, a program developed under Senate Bill 594 by Sen. Lois Wolk, D-Davis. Wolk and 22 other legislators urged the commission to shelve a proposal that would eliminate net energy metering aggregation.

Since the commission allowed aggregation in 2014, customers of Pacific Gas and Electric Co., Southern California Edison and San Diego Gas and Electric Co. have been able to aggregate electrical accounts to save on their energy bills. Previously, power generated from an onsite renewable facility could not be counted against other meters for utility customers, meaning that farmers had to install a separate facility for each meter, Mills said.

Farmer Steve Wilbur of Tulare, who runs a diversified farming and dairy operation, installed a solar system that went online in early February. He said he expects the system to generate more than 1.4 million kilowatt-hours annually, covering up to 90 percent of his energy use. Being able to aggregate the meters, Wilbur said, is what sold him on the project.

"You don't want to generate more than you consume, and aggregation allows you to add multiple meters, which allows you to offset more. That's why dairies have taken advantage of this: because dairies have continuous usage—365 days a year, dairies are consuming power," said Wilbur, a Southern California Edison customer. "With aggregation, if you've got a dozen meters spread across 600 acres, that's more kilowatt-hours that you can generate and apply against your bill, so it is appealing to growers."

Walnut grower Russ Lester of Dixon Ridge Farms in Yolo County—who now relies exclusively on renewable energy after having incorporated biomass and solar systems at his farm—said use of the net-energy metering program is the reason that photovoltaic systems have done so well in California, especially in agriculture.

"Net energy metering has allowed us to balance out our high-month usages with our high production months, and that is a benefit," Lester said.

Net metering aggregation allows him not to take land or other resources out of production to use for renewable power, he said.

"We can utilize a roof space and aggregate in an area where we have the resources to power the grid and not have to misuse resources to produce renewables," Lester said, adding that that benefits farms such as his that combine net metering with solar photovoltaic power, "because we can better balance our electrical demands so that we have less impact on the grid."

He said net-metering aggregation could become even more valuable in the future, if farmers were allowed to aggregate on properties that are not contiguous; the current program limits the aggregated meters to contiguous properties.

"With agriculture, most properties are scattered over some area and opening this up would allow renewables to do even a better job," Lester said.

In their letter to the CPUC, the farm groups said programs such as net-metering aggregation will help agriculture to play a significant role in reducing greenhouse gases and other pollutants while producing renewable energy to assist in meeting statewide goals.

"The agricultural community can be part of the solution if you retain program elements that ensure its continued participation in the net energy metering program," the letter emphasized.

(Christine Souza is an assistant editor of Ag Alert. She may be contacted at csouza@cfbf.com.)

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The California almond harvest will be smaller this year due to a lack of winter chill and ongoing drought conditions, but the largest marketer of the crop reports a positive outlook for the almond business. Courtesy/CFBF

Almond Growers Review Eventful Season

Christine Souza, CFBF

The success of the California almond business put almond growers and marketers at the center of the drought debate this year—a subject addressed as members of the state's largest almond marketer gathered for their annual meeting in Modesto.

"The historic drought has brought new challenges of water insecurity, unpredictable consequences to intermediate production and supply, as well as unprecedented media attacks," Blue Diamond Growers Chairman of the Board Dan Cummings said.

Addressing an estimated 1,200 people at the cooperative's 105th annual meeting last week, Cummings said he believes California "needs to manage its water better, and stakeholders traditionally at odds over the water allocation need to work together to develop a long-term water strategy."

Blue Diamond President and CEO Mark Jansen said the almond sector became a target in both traditional and social media over its perceived water usage.

"In year four of the drought, many of us believed that the almond industry was under attack. Talk show hosts, bloggers, newspapers were all looking for a villain—and for a while, almonds were that scapegoat," Jansen said.

Reporting eventually became "more balanced," he said, following what he called a "concerted effort" by Blue Diamond, the Almond Board of California and others in agriculture.

"California is the best place to grow almonds," Jansen said, thanks to its unique, hot and dry Mediterranean climate, adding that the state's growers are 10 times more productive, efficient and sustainable than their counterparts in Spain, the world's second-largest almond-growing region.

Cummings, who grows almonds near Chico, reported that Blue Diamond had achieved a new high of more than $1.6 billion in sales during its most-recent fiscal year, while marketing almonds and products to more than 90 countries around the world.

"Worldwide demand remains strong," he said, "maintaining our historic returns."

Jansen noted that the cooperative saw its revenues grow by $200 million, even in a short crop year, by focusing on sales of value-added products.

"Blue Diamond is the unusual food company that is averaging 20 percent growth," Jansen said. "We are really getting near our revenue goal of $2 billion and more importantly, we remain very optimistic on the future growth prospects of almonds."

The cooperative's leaders also cited its efforts to develop new products and

ALMONDS continued on **8 »**

Agriculture

Weekend Cold Temperatures Appear Positive for Central Valley Citrus Crop

Temperatures dipped under 30 degrees over this Holiday weekend throughout the Central Valley.

For orange growers, the colder temperatures were a welcomed change from last year's unseasonable warm winter. Temperatures in the coldest areas of the Valley dropped to of 27 and 28 degrees for a very short time, which is ideal this early in the navel season as it improves fruit color and flavor.

The Valley's growing mandarin crop which is traditionally less cold tolerant, appears to be unscathed by the recent cold weather.

Mandarin growers in Kern, Tulare, Fresno, and Madera counties do report running wind machines on Saturday and Sunday nights to push temperatures up in the groves. A strong inversion layer in many areas also helped to keep temperatures manageable.

If this weekend's temperatures are a sign on what's to come this winter, it could mean good things for the Valley's citrus crop.

California Citrus Mutual will continue to release statements following cold weather incidents for the remainder of the season.

California Citrus Mutual is a non-profit trade association of citrus growers, with approximately 2,200 members representing 70% California's 362,000-acre, $3 billion citrus industry. The mission of California Citrus Mutual is to inform, educate, and advocate on behalf of citrus growers. The Exeter, California-based organization was founded in 1977.

Cold weather improves the quality of citrus fruit. Nancy Vigran/Valley Voice

California Citrus Mutual Donates $25,000 Towards Psyllid Control Research

California Citrus Mutual (CCM) is pleased to announce it has donated $25,000 to the crop sciences department at Cal Poly Pomona for research on Tamarixia radiate, a biological control agent for the Asian citrus psyllid.

The Asian citrus psyllid is an invasive insect known to be in California that can carry a deadly citrus disease called Huanglongbing, which was recently discovered on multiple properties in San Gabriel.

The donation is the result of partnership between CCM and Bayer CropScience to raise awareness among residential citrus tree owners about the Asian citrus psyllid and Huanglongbing.

To create social buzz around the issue, Bayer and CCM launched the Citrus Matters social campaign encouraging consumers and citrus growers to share why "Citrus Matters" to them. For every share of the #citrusmatters hashtag, Bayer contributed $1 to CCM to be used toward programs to mitigate the spread of the Asian citrus psyllid.

"California residents are a valuable partner in the fight against Huanglongbing," says CCM President Joel Nelsen. "We're grateful for the opportunity to work with Bayer CropScience to raise awareness about this very serious issue."

Nearly 60% of California homeowners have a citrus tree in their backyard.

In an effort to control populations of the Asian citrus psyllid in residential and urban areas of the state, the industry has invested millions in a biological control program that utilizes a beneficial insect and natural predator of ACP, Tamarixia radiate.

Steve Olson, product manager for Bayer CropScience presented the donation to California Citrus Mutual Thursday night at the organization's 38th Annual Meeting in Visalia, CA. There, Nelsen announced that the funds will go toward student research at Cal Poly Pomona.

Cal Poly Pomona's Dr. Valerie Mellano, Professor and Chair of the Plant Science Department and Dr. Anna Soper, Post-Doctoral Scholar accepted the donation on behalf of the University.

"We chose to donate the funds to Cal Poly Pomona because of the great work the students are doing there to help the industry fight back against the Asian citrus psyllid using beneficial insects," continues Nelsen.

"The donation will not only benefit the citrus industry in terms of the research, it will help provide valuable work experience to students who plan on entering the citrus industry after graduation."

California Citrus Mutual is a non-profit trade association of citrus growers, with approximately 2,200 members representing 70% California's 362,000-acre, $3 billion citrus industry. The mission of California Citrus Mutual is to inform, educate, and advocate on behalf of citrus growers. The Exeter, California-based organization was founded in 1977.

Almonds

Continued from p. 7

its investments in new processing facilities as key factors in its results.

"With our Almond Innovation Center creating an unending stream of new almond products, Blue Diamond is in fact the industry leader in developing new products, new markets and expanding the use of almonds," Cummings said.

At some point the drought will end, almond supplies will grow and prices will fall, he said, and when that happens, "Blue Diamond will be ready to seize the opportunity with innovative, new products, expansion into new markets and smart, highly visible promotional programs."

In recent years, the cooperative has focused on expanding its Blue Diamond brand of products such as its nondairy beverage Almond Breeze, crackers and new flavored snack almonds; Sriracha-flavored almonds were added this year. It has also worked to export those products to buyers in additional countries.

"International retail is our most rapidly growing business," Jansen said.

During the past five years, Blue Diamond said it has begun projects and upgrades to expand total capacity and develop new value-added almond products. The company completed the first phase of construction of a new manufacturing and processing plant in Turlock in 2013, and plans additional expansion during the next few years.

Last week, the company's Salida facility unveiled a new warehouse designed specifically for nonpareil almonds.

Hosting a bus tour of the warehouse, Blue Diamond maintenance supervisor Eric Tualla said it features an automated design with sloped floors, which allows almonds to move into the plant "so that no man will touch the product"—a design intended to promote food safety. The new warehouse has a 60 million-pound capacity.

Jason Costa, main production line manager at the Salida plant, noted that upgrades and new and gentler equipment in the main production line have resulted in less almond breakage. Total capacity for the Salida plant is 240 million pounds.

Almond grower Chris Morgner of Chowchilla took a virtual-reality tour, donning a headset that allowed him to see how almonds flow into the plant.

"It was pretty realistic and it is a nice way to get a look inside the new warehouse," Morgner said.

Grower Sonny Johns of Modesto, who attended the meeting with his son Clayton, said he was happy to see that the cooperative is growing for the future.

"It's exciting to see it grow. It's very exciting to be part of Blue Diamond," Johns said.

California farmers account for approximately 83 percent of the world's almond production. Bearing acreage has increased to 890,000 acres. Government estimates put the total California almond crop at 1.8 billion pounds, down 4 percent from the previous year.

(Christine Souza is an assistant editor of Ag Alert. She may be contacted at csouza@cfbf.com.)

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Milk

Continued from p. 6

on keeping the quota exemption.

"Since we as producer-handlers had created our own Class 1 sales by having a processing plant and going out and creating the sales—walking the streets, knocking on doors and gaining customers—we felt that our quota should be preserved just like all the other quota should be," Shehadey said.

He testified in support of the cooperatives' proposal with the addition of the producer-handlers' proposal. As a dairy farmer, Shehadey said he has the same concerns as others in the state who don't own a processing facility, including the high cost of feed and the challenge of doing business in California.

Leslie "Bees" Butler, a dairy economist at the University of California, Davis, said he expects USDA will render a decision that allows California to join the federal order—and one that keeps quota intact and probably pooling, although there may be slightly different rules on pooling. He said he also thinks USDA will let producer-handlers keep their quota exemption and possibly allow out-of-state dairies that ship milk to California to continue receiving the current plant-blend price for their milk—the focus of Nevada-based Ponderosa Dairy's proposal.

But Butler said he didn't think processors succeeded in asserting that there are no significant disorderly marketing conditions to warrant promulgation of a federal milk marketing order for California.

"It's hard to prove. And even if you do show it, California is still the odd man out when it comes to milk marketing orders," he said, referring to the nation's biggest dairy state not operating under the federal order while most other states do. "For that reason alone, bringing California into the federal milk marketing order system will make it a more whole system."

The biggest caveat for California producers, he said, is losing local control once they join the federal order. That includes losing the ability to conduct a local hearing to adjust the milk pricing formula in the speedy manner available from CDFA. As the federal order hearing has demonstrated, making any changes under the federal system is a much more drawn-out process, Butler noted.

(Ching Lee is an assistant editor of Ag Alert. She may be contacted at clee@cfbf.com.)

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Hanford

Continued from p. 1

laughter. Ramos became agitated and said Pannett leaked information this time just like he did during another city council issue concerning eminent domain. Ramos said that the leak came directly from Pannett through Thomas to him. Ramos continued his comments through Pannett's laughter from the dais, saying that Ramirez should not be vice-mayor because of the pending investigation into his campaign finances.

Pannett responded by asking, "Did that come through me too?"

Ramos said he didn't think it was very funny.

After public comment had finished, the city attorney took over the process of reorganizing the council. Status quo would have dictated that vice mayor, David Ayers, be promoted to mayor, but Ramirez had different plans. He nominated Mendes as mayor, and before that could be seconded, Curry nominated Ayers as mayor. The city clerk put forth Ramirez' motion first for a vote and Mendes won 3-2, with Curry and Ayers voting no. Then Ayers nominated Pannett for vice-mayor. But Pannett suggested that the council let someone new take the helm and he motioned that Ramirez be chosen as vice-mayor. The vote again was 3-2, with Curry and Ayers voting no.

During a phone conversation after the meeting, Thomas exclaimed, "That son of a bitch did it! He actually went in there and told all those lies."

Thomas explained that he and his wife were sitting at Burger King eating breakfast the day before when Ramos approached the two of them. Ramos explained that he was going to use Thomas' name to say that Pannett leaked the information that the council had already decided who was going to be mayor and vice mayor.

New Hanford Vice Mayor Francisco Ramirez with supporters Shaka Sudds and Shelly Barker. Catherine Doe/Valley Voice

Ramos said that he was going to tell the city council that Pannett proclaimed it was a "done deal." Ramos explained that he had tried everything and that he was going to do whatever he could to stop Ramirez and Mendes, because nothing else was working.

New Hanford Mayor Justin Mendes with his son. Catherine Doe/Valley Voice

He was hoping that his comments would spur a grand jury investigation into Ramirez.

Thomas responded to Ramos' idea by asking, "You are going to lie to do that? Why don't you tell them that we went to the moon and smoked marijuana too?"

Thomas wanted to make it crystal clear that Pannett has never called him. Thomas had, in the past, called Pannett to express his support for Mendes and Ramirez. He told Pannett that Mendes and Ramirez were "doing a damn good job moving the city forward. All Curry is doing is starting fights and moving the city backwards."

Thomas works seven days a week so normally listens to the meetings the next day using the audio. That is how he came to believe that Ramirez and Mendes were doing what was best for the city. Thomas said that if he had been on the city council he would have voted Mendes in as mayor and Ramirez as vice-mayor. He has also written letters to the Hanford Sentinel to voice his support for the two of them.

His theory was that the hard feelings toward Mendes and Ramirez started after the 2014 election. Curry and former council member Danny Chin campaigned for Mendes and Ramirez with the expectation that the newbies would be their puppets. Thomas believes that Curry "was pissed" when Mendes and Ramirez started voting independently of him.

Thomas was a Hanford City Council member from 2006 – 2010. He lost to Mendes in 2014. Thomas ended the conversation still in a state of shock about Ramos' comments.

"I cannot believe it. What an idiot."

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Wells

Continued from p. 1

be tapped to truck to those in need.

"This is an ultra-high priority," said Eric Coyne, of the Tulare County Economic Development Office. "We hope to have the well tested and put into service within 30 days."

The county has had to find water sources from all over the county and even in Clovis to provide water for those who have dry wells, he said.

"At many levels this has been put at the front of the line," he said. But now, that seems to be on temporary hold, also, with the three agencies trying to come to an agreement.

One thing they do all agree on is that the functionality of the well needs to be determined, which requires some testing.

That testing should take about six to eight days, said Mike Reed, Porterville's acting public works director.

Then, perhaps, some final decisions will be made.

At a joint meeting in early November, "the state seemed to have the impression that Porterville was not interested in the needs of those outside city limits," Reed said.

"Porterville is also hurting," he said, "and while that is adding additional problems – the state misunderstood."

Throughout the emergency drought situation, Porterville has made it clear that it must look out for its city and residents first, but has been more than willing to help out county residents as much as it can without adding to much further strain to the city's water supply, Reed said. Water was being used from a nearby system, in Jones Corner (also known as Village Gardens), which is owned by Porterville, and trucked by the county to fill temporary tanks outside of individual homes.

That water system had been monitored regularly, twice a month, to assure there was plenty of water for its regular users as well as the county's extra need.

At a second meeting in mid-November, state officials seemed upset that the city was not willing to help with those outside of city limits, Reed said.

"That was not the case, I really struggle with how they got that impression," he said.

Nevertheless, state officials stated that the county must come first and that a filling station was in order.

A filling station was never to be in the cards, Reed said. The city would have never moved forward with the new well, or the water allocation for the county, had the possibility of a filling station been part of the picture.

"Porterville agreed to a seamless project and made it very clear to the state (and the county)," Reed said, that the well would not be a filling station.

"That would have killed the deal," he said.

The institutions' verbal agreement (with no formal agreement signed) was that the new well would become the property of the City of Porterville, Reed said. It would be added to the city's current water system and in exchange 115 already approved residences in the East Porterville area would be allowed to hook-up to the city system for permanent water, with hook-up fees waived.

More residences could be added to those already approved, Reed said, but the first 115 were those that met the city's criteria of being a single-family residence and having a water main in front of the residence already in place. These homes would be allowed connection as soon as the state's current emergency drought declaration would end.

But with the potential lack of the new well for the city's use, any allotment to outside sources had to be halted, a decision made by Porterville City Council on November 17. A decision for which the city has been chastised.

The county had reached an agreement to use water from a well at the Porterville Development Council for up to one million gallons of water per month, just prior to this.

"I think there was an expectation that this well would come into service in a much shorter timeframe," said City Manager John Lollis.

This complicated the need for the county to find more water sources for its residents, and it was thought that making the new well a filling station would be a quick fix, he said. But, it wouldn't be the long-term solution.

The city has been working very hard to get this back on track, Reed said, wanting to stop the development of a filling station, but rather moving back to the original plan of hooking the well into the city's water system.

"It is a win-win for all parties involved," he said.

While visiting the issue was to be on the December 1 city council agenda with county and state representatives to be in attendance, it was pulled from the agenda at the last minute as officials from the three entities have been involved in several conference calls during the previous week to 10 days.

It appears any further recommendations will wait until the well tests are complete.

The cost for the well to be completed and operational is estimated at $2.2 million, with half the expense coming from the California Department of Water Resources and the other half split between the state Water Control Board and US Department of Agriculture, according to Michelle Withnell, spokesman for Tulare County.

Despite slightly above average rainfall for the Porterville area so far this year, the area and the state have and will have drought concerns for some time to come.

Until there is enough water built up in Success Lake to allow routine releases of water down the Tule River and into the Porter Slough, many private wells will remain inactive, Reed said. And even then, some wells may be inoperable and the water quality for drinking and cooking may be questionable. If the wells become operational again, each residence will need to be unhooked from their temporary water tanks and re-hooked back to their well system, which could again become problematic next summer.

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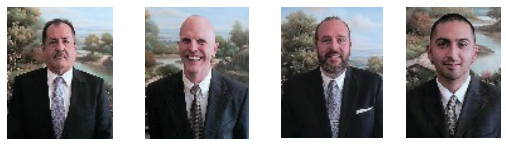
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Briefly...

CITIZEN INPUT SOUGHT FOR GROUNDWATER SUSTAINABILITY

Local Agencies Seeking Advisory Committee Members

In the wake of the State's historic drought, local agencies have come together to address the region's groundwater and how they'll manage the precious resource.

"In late March of this year, the City of Visalia, the City of Tulare and the Tulare Irrigation District finalized the decision to form the Mid-Kaweah Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA)," says Michael Olmos, City Manager, City of Visalia. "We need the public's ideas and input, now the time has come to recruit citizens to serve on the GSA's Advisory Committee."

As the GSA makes plans to manage groundwater levels, water recharge and storage facilities for water consumers, the Advisory Committee will serve the greater GSA as a tool to help shape the Groundwater Sustainability Plan for the Mid-Kaweah region.

"The State's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) requires that we develop a Groundwater Sustainability Plan by January 31, 2020. That may seem years away, but the time to act is now," added Olmos.

Individuals must be residents or associated with a business in the Mid-Kaweah area. Members representing the agricultural community, government agencies, environmental interests and disadvantaged communities are sought, as well as members at large.

The Advisory Committee will consist of seven to 11 members. All applications will be reviewed by the GSA Management Committee, after which time recommendations for appointment will be made to the GSA Board.

Applications are available now from the City of Tulare at 411 E Kern Ave. Tulare, CA 93274 or online at www.tulare.ca.gov, from the Tulare Irrigation District at 6826 Avenue 240, Tulare, CA 93274 or online at www.tulareid.org, and from the City of Visalia at 220 N. Santa Fe St. Visalia, CA 93292 or online at www.visalia.city.

Applications are due by 5 p.m. on Friday, December 11th. For questions, contact Michelle Nicholson, City of Visalia Chief Deputy City Clerk at (559) 713-4512.

STUDENTS URGED TO REGISTER EARLY FOR SPRING 2016 SEMESTER AT WEST HILLS COLLEGE

The start of Spring Semester at West Hills College is only weeks away and both returning and new students are being urged to enroll now before the most popular classes are filled.

Registration is an easy online process and support is available on the college website for those who need assistance. In addition to general education classes for students who desire to transfer to a four-year college, West Hills offers a long list of courses for everyone. Whether you need a class to update or upgrade your job skills or are looking for a whole new career and need an intensive training program, West Hills College has the course you need.

For the first time, students at WHCC can also register for an intensive Career Technical Education Academy offered this spring. It is focused on computer programming. The year-long course begins in January and affords students the ability to learn HTML, Java, Java Script, and CSS and also take part in an internship in the computer programming field at the end of the academy. Students will become job ready in less than a year.

West Hills offers traditional classroom learning at all three sites in the district (Coalinga, Lemoore and Firebaugh). Some courses are divided into 9-week "mini-mesters," which is a convenient way for some students to learn the same material in the same number of classroom hours in half a semester. Students can take night classes in order to learn in the evenings. There are also hundreds of courses online, which means you can earn credits from anywhere there's an internet connection. The college website is a source for more information, including a set of helpful Frequently Asked Questions: westhillscollege.com

"Scholarships and financial aid are also widely available to many students, and students are often surprised to learn they qualify for one or the other or both," according to Rita Grogan, Associate Vice Chancellor of Enrollment Management and Institutional Effectiveness. "But we urge students to apply and register early so they don't miss out on financial assistance or the classes they need and want."

To search for classes with open seats, visit the online course schedule at http://bit.ly/1TWsid8 and search #openseats. The search can then be narrowed down by campus or subject.

UNIVERSAL MEDITECH INC. WILL LOCATE R&D AND ASSEMBLY TEST KIT FACILITY IN TULARE, CA

Universal Meditech, Inc. will open a facility in the city of Tulare specializing in research and development and assembly of diagnostic test kits with an emphasis on dairy cattle reproduction. The company will lease an existing 22,000 sf facility that will eventually create 50-70 local jobs. Renovations are currently underway with the new facility expected to open in January 2016.

"We are pleased to locate this state-of-the-art facility in the heart of California's top producing agricultural land. We recognized the positive business environment, strength of agriculture and community support for this venture in Tulare" said Jesse Zhu, CEO. After a thorough search, we found a building that will house our requirements for laboratory, assembling machines and other packaging equipment. This facility will help us meet our company's strategy of growth of introducing these diagnostic systems to global markets."

Tulare Mayor David Macedo said, "The decision of Universal Meditech Inc. to locate in the City of Tulare is a testament to the fact Tulare has everything needed for a business to be successful; available real estate, ample workforce and a pro-business city government. We welcome Universal Meditech Inc. to our community."

Paul Saldana, president and CEO of the Tulare County Economic Development Corporation, said the selection highlights Tulare's attributes. "This is a good example of ways in which the public and private sector work together to create new jobs," Saldana said. "Through the efforts of the City of Tulare to work with the company to identify necessary facility improvements, expedite inspections and permitting and the Workforce Investment Board serving Tulare County to assist in recruitment of technical staff it reconfirms the supportive attributes we have to offer growing companies like Universal Meditech, Inc."

KAWEAH DELTA LEAD DISCUSSION IN NATIONAL WEBINAR

Kaweah Delta asked to lead discussion in hospital acquired infection prevention strategies during CMS Webinar with over 2,500 participants.

On, Friday, November 20, the Kaweah Delta infection prevention team and clinic partners were invited to contribute as presenters during a Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Webinar. Kaweah Delta has seen a significant reduction in the rate of catheter-associated urinary tract infections (CAUTIs). In addition, reduction in central line-associated blood stream infection (CLABSI) via prevention strategies has made Kaweah Delta a lead in preventing hospital acquired infections. The webinar is geared to gathering health quality experts, clinicians, and consumers to improve the care delivered to people with Medicare.

"We have created a webinar series entitled 'Improving Patient Safety' that highlights hospitals that have had success in improving their safety measure rates in the Hospital Value-Based Purchasing Program" stated Kristen Lea Woodruff, Hospital Inpatient VIQR Outreach and Education Support Program. "We choose your hospital because [Kaweah Delta] improved its Fiscal Year 2016 CAUTI Standard Infection Ratio (SIR) from the baseline period to the performance period by a substantial amount while maintaining a positive Total Performance Score (TPS). We would like to applaud your efforts and congratulate you and your hospital in the success of those efforts!"

The development and implantation to reduce infection ratios started in 2011 by the Kaweah Delta executive team appointing the Healthcare-Associated Infection Prevention Steering Committee (HAIPS). Within HAIPS, subcommittees were established to concentrate on prevention of CLABSIs and CAUTIs. Efforts would include the participation of multiple levels of staff including physicians, advance nurses, clinicians, and other healthcare professionals.

"Kaweah Delta has made significant inroads in reducing the rate of CAUTIs and CLABSIs" said Lindsay Mann, Chief Executive Officer for Kaweah Delta Health Care District. "Our infection prevention committees have implemented and executed a prominent model of intervention. It is an honor to be recognized at a national level and given a platform to share with other hospitals around the nation our current strategies. We will continue to provide top quality healthcare, and lead in reducing the risk of hospital acquired infections."

Participants of the webinar learned more about prevention strategies including scrupulous hand hygiene, dedicated dressing/cap days, use of aseptic technique with changes, and daily review of line necessity with physicians.

"We normally participate as listeners during webinars, but this honor gave us the opportunity to share our improvements and lead the discussion on effective protocols in infection prevention" said Melissa A. Janes, Infection Prevention Manager at Kaweah Delta Health Care District. "Over 2500 people were in attendance and we were very proud to represent Kaweah Delta on a national level."

A review of the presentation is available on-line at http://www.qualityreportingcenter.com/event/hospital-vbp-patient-safety-series-clabsicauti/

APPLICATIONS NOW BEING ACCEPTED FOR NURSING PROGRAMS AT WEST HILLS COLLEGE LEMOORE

Applications are now being accepted for three nursing programs at West Hills College Lemoore: the Nurse Assistant (NATP) Training Program, Associate of Science Degree in Nursing Program (ADN), and the Licensed Vocational Nurse to Associate of Science Degree in Nursing Bridge Program (LVN-ADN).

The application period for the NATP ends on Tuesday, December 15 while the application for the ADN and LVN-ADN program closes on Tuesday, February 2. An information session for all of WHCL's health career programs will be held on Wednesday, December 9 from noon to 1 pm in room 821 at WHCL.

"If considering a career in health care, our programs are an excellent way to receive a certification, be able to be employed and use this certification and experience for advancement in health care," said Kathryn DeFede, West Hills Community College District interim director of health careers.

Students must be at least 18 and have completed all prerequisite courses with a GPA of 2.5 and with a grade of C or better in each course.

The LVN-ADN bridge program is a one-year program that qualifies students who already hold a vocational nursing license to take the RN NCLEX exam for licensure as a registered nurse. In addition to meeting the same requirements as for the ADN program, students must also hold a CPR card and have received a minimum score of 62% on the Assessment Technologies Institute of Essential Academic Skills test.

The NATP program prepares students to take the state certification exam to become a Certified Nursing Assistant during the course of 63 classroom hours and 135 hours of clinical experience and begins on Saturday, January 16. It runs until May 25 and is offered on Saturdays and Sundays. Students must enroll as a WHCL student, be at least 17, and go through a physical exam, TB test, drug test and criminal background check. They should also hold a CPR card.

DeFede added that the programs prepare students to go into a field that is in need of new employees.

"In the Central Valley, the health care industry is short 400 registered nurses each graduation year," she said.

For more information or an application packet for any of these programs, visit www.westhillscollege.com/lemoore/academics/health, or call the Health Careers Office, (559) 924-3490.

Boudreaux Announces Sheriff's Department Promotions

Tulare County Sheriffs Office

Sheriff Mike Boudreaux is pleased to announce the promotion of the following personnel to the rank of Sergeant: Sgt. Steve Sanchez, Jr., and Sgt. Michele Price.

A formal promotional ceremony was held at 9:30am on Monday, November 30 in the lobby at the Tulare County Sheriff's Office, 2404 W. Burrel Avenue, in Visalia.

Sgt. Sanchez was raised in Reedley and graduated from Reedley High School in 2000. He resides there today with his wife, Celeste, who happens to be a homicide detective with the Visalia Police Department, and their two sons, Adon, 13, and Nathan, 3.

He was hired by the Tulare County Sheriff's Office in 2004 and was assigned to the Main Jail. In 2006, he transferred to Headquarters Patrol. From there he became a Detective in the Gang Suppression Unit in 2008 and, later, in 2012, he transferred to the Violent Crimes Unit.

He also served as a member of SWAT and Search and Rescue.

During his 11 years of service, he received four letters of commendation from the Sheriff for his investigations involving violent crimes and criminal street gangs. He co-authored the Gang Injunction for Cutler/Orosi in 2011 and co-authored the Earlimart Gang Injunction in 2015.

Sanchez has a 72% solve rate for homicides assigned to him since 2012 when he transferred to Violent Crimes.

He was the lead case agent for the Tulare County Sheriff's Office and wrote the running affidavit and gang association search warrants for Operation Red Sol, a multi-agency investigation aimed at taking down the Norteno Criminal Street Gang in Tulare County.

Operation Red Sol resulted in the District Attorney filing charges against 85 gang members, 36 of whom face life sentences and 13 face life sentences without the possibility of parole. During Operation Red Sol, 33 guns, 32 pounds of methamphetamine, 5 pounds of heroin, 775 marijuana plants, 6 pounds of processed marijuana and $65,000 in cash were seized.

Sgt. Price began her law enforcement career with the Tulare County Sheriff's Office in 1998 and was assigned to the Bob Wiley Detention Facility as a lead officer. She also worked at Road Camp, the Men's Correctional Facility and the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Program.

In 2001, she was assigned to the Orosi Substation and a year later was reassigned to the Pixley Substation. In 2003, she began working in narcotics patrol with a K9 named Anja.

With her K9 partner, she worked out of the Pixley Substation and Headquarters for more than four years before medically retiring Anja.

Sgt. Price was next assigned as a Field Training Officer where she successfully trained 30 newly hired deputies.

In 2007, she transferred to the Gang Task Force Unit where she qualified as a Gang Expert in the Superior Court of Tulare County. After completing SWAT school, she became a member of the Tulare County Sheriff's SWAT Team.

Later, in 2011, Sgt. Price transferred to the Narcotics Task Force where she qualified as a Narcotics Expert. She wrote numerous search warrants for various narcotics and assisted with the execution of the search warrants.

While assigned to the Narcotics Task Force in 2013, she was assigned a K9, Isaac, who excelled in narcotics detection. That same year, Sgt. Price was sent to Quantico, Virginia to become Clandestine Lab Certified.

"I have assisted with the investigation and dismantling of methamphetamine labs in Tulare County," she said.

In 2014, she was named Detective Officer of the year, an honor voted on by her peers.

This year, Sgt. Price was reassigned with her K9 to the newly formed County Apprehension Tracking Criminals in Hiding (CATCH) Unit. She assisted with several high profile apprehensions within the first two weeks of the unit's inception.

She has a seat on the Executive Board of the Deputy Sheriff's Association and has served as secretary for the union since 2012.

Jail

Continued from p. 1

Every time a criminal doesn't have to be locked up, the savings to the county is enormous.

"There's a large cost value in housing an inmate, $20,000 to $23,000 a year, so obviously there's a savings for the taxpayer," Robinson said.

Ironically, that savings could help pay for the jail expansions. While total cost of the two projects is $62 million, Kings County had to put up $9 million of its own money to match state funding. That money will have been well spent if the county's new way of handling inmates pays off in fewer crimes committed over the long-run.

"The bigger goal is to reduce crime rates," Robinson said. "The way to do that is to get folks who have committed crimes in the past not to commit crimes in the future."

Worth the Investment?

There are some who criticize what could be seen as a softer approach to crime, but Robinson says the only way to prove the theory is to test it.

"I tell people come see Kings County in five years, and we'll see how much of an impact it has," he said.

And, there's the human factor to consider. Many of those in jail suffer from drug addiction, mental illness or both, and perhaps they can be redeemed.

"I'm still a cop at heart, I'm all for the death penalty, I'm all for locking up the gang members, but there's a larger population of people who have mental health and drug issues we can have an impact on," Robinson said. "Let's do what we can to turn them around."

This new take on criminal justice is gaining popularity, and part of the reason may be the realization that no matter how we treat criminals, they will eventually return to live among us once they've served their time.

"The more we play this message, the more people will jump on board," Robinson said. "We tried the whole lock-'em-up, and that sort of worked, but at some time they do get out."

Political Fix

Continued from p. 3

his background, not reporting campaign donations, and requested that the council members press felony charges against him. When Councilmember Justin Mendes asked the mayor to stop reading the letters because he was out of order, Mr. Curry said, "I was asked to read these into the record and that is what I'm doing."

The *Hanford Sentinel* did their research and discovered that Mr. Curry's letter writers were not registered voters in Kings County, did not live in Hanford, and apparently did not even exist. In fact, it appeared that the letters were written by the same person. When asked how he came into possession of the letters, Mr. Curry said that someone delivered them to his house.

Who delivered them to his house? Why did the letter writers not use email or an old fashioned mailbox? Who knows?

Well, most likely Mr. Curry does. Because of the similarities, it's obvious the people who got Mr. Curry to read the letters "into the record," and those who produced the current letters and postcard, are one and the same.

"If these individuals are real, they should come to the September 1 meeting," Mr. Ramirez told the *Hanford Sentinel*, "Approach the dais and tell me I did this." Alas, no one showed up at the September meeting to defend their accusations or demand felony charges be filed against Mr. Ramirez.

Hardly a week after Mr. Curry's letter incident, the director of Big Brothers and Sisters' organization received a call from a blocked number. Without providing any evidence, the caller accused Mr. Ramirez of stealing money from their organization. The caller identified himself as Paul Martinez, then forgot and referred to himself as Frank, then became agitated and demanded to have Mr. Ramirez removed from the Big Brothers and Sisters' board of directors. The call was taken as seriously as Mr. Curry's letters.

So what's the rub?

To start, the Hanford City Council has been at each other's throats, bickering, backstabbing and bullying for years – so this is just another day in Mayberry. But in Mr. Ramirez' particular case, it seems that some former supporters aren't feelin' the love. A handful of people campaigned for him when he was opposed to Measure S, but now hate him because he voted with councilmen Gary Pannett and Justin Mendes to change a 2002 city ordinance that prohibited building movie theaters outside the downtown district. Vice Mayor David Ayers and Mayor Curry voted not to change the ordinance.

The vote to allow movie theaters to operate in commercial zones outside of downtown, such as 12th Avenue and Lacy Boulevard, happened August 4. Two weeks later the attacks started against Mr. Ramirez and have not stopped. Mr. Pannett said during the following council meeting, "What I am seeing now is more vicious attacks. If you don't vote one way, you're going to get wiped out the next day." Mr. Pannett offered to speak to the Kings County Grand Jury, the district attorney's office or local law enforcement to "tell what I know."

Some downtown business owners took the vote as a personal attack. "You're going to kill downtown," declared a Hanford resident during the council meeting in reaction to repealing the protective ordinance.

But other Hanford residents think downtown had 13 years of protection with which they did nothing. All Hanfordites have now to show for their lousy ordinance is two crappy old theaters that haven't been renovated since the 1990's while Lemoore has a state-of-the-art movie theater.

Visalia went through the exact same growing pains and Mr. Ayers and Mr. Curry should know that. The Visalia downtown business group fought hard against the construction in the 1960's of the Visalia Mall. Before that they fought against the new location in 1938 of COS because it was "way out in the boonies."

What if the Visalia Downtown retailers had gotten their way? Visalia would have stagnated and the downtown would have suffered for it and possibly died. Ironically, while being roundly criticized, the decisions that Council members Mendes, Pannett and Ramirez are making today will be what keeps Hanford thriving tomorrow.

Another motive for wanting Mr. Ramirez gone might be the reorganization of the city council. On December 1 the Hanford city council picked a new mayor, Mr. Mendes, and vice-mayor, Mr. Ramirez.

Former councilmember Lou Martinez had this to say during the November 2014 election, "I think it's time for people to quit the infighting and disagreeing and learn to work together to find a solution for the problems we have at hand."

He then went on to lose the election by a landslide.

And Finally .....

When the terrorists attacked Paris--on Friday, the 13th no less--it crossed my mind how lucky we were to be bordered by Mexico. Except for the drug cartels, which Americans had a hand in creating, Mexico is a peaceful country of people with whom we share a religion and an alphabet. Over the last 70 years when waves of "illegal's" swept over our boarder it was to pick our fruit, clean our hotel rooms and enjoy the American way of life, not destroy it. While the immigrants' lives got better, Californians' lives got better also. California reaped the benefits of an expanded tax base and businesses thrived with a huge willing, able and affordable workforce. Immigrants are a major force behind California's being such an economic powerhouse.

California Immigrant Policy Center concludes that immigrants in California pay roughly $30 billion in federal taxes, $5.2 billion in state income taxes, and $4.6 billion in sales taxes each year. In California, "the average immigrant-headed household contributes a net $2,679 annually to Social Security, which is $539 more than the average US-born household."

According to the Economic Policy Institute, "it would actually hurt, not help, the economy and the jobs situation. The key intuition here is that while unauthorized immigrant workers add to the supply of labor, they also consume goods and services, thereby generating economic activity and creating jobs. .. unauthorized immigrants are not just workers, they are also consumers. We could remove them, which would indeed reduce the number of workers, but it would also reduce the jobs created by the economic activity they generate. So the right choice is to bring the unauthorized immigrants who are already here out of the shadows so they can help the country realize its economic potential."

So just to clarify, the Mexicans take our crap jobs, get crap pay, and keep our state's economy humming and vibrant. Then people like Donald Trump and his ilk want to spend billions of our tax dollars to kick them out? As Bill Maher said, "We need to build a fence to keep them in," which is true because the recovery from the recession has been so uneven that the Pew Research Center reported that more Mexicans are leaving the United States than coming in.

But there is a huge difference between our Mexican immigrants and Europe's African and Middle Eastern immigrants arriving on their land to find work. Can you imagine a Mexican-American in a suicide vest sitting at Starbucks? That is exactly what happened in Paris. While our terrorist attack on the World Trade Center was perpetrated by foreigners, Paris was attacked by French and Belgium citizens.

I knew the minute the news broke about the Paris attacks that the terrorists were born in France. First, second, and third generation descendants of immigrants are treated horribly in France. Those of European decent do not accept them into their circles. France's ultra right political party, the National Front, hates non-whites and is practically mainstream and growing.

On the other hand, in California, white supremacist groups are laughed at and their members are considered crazy. Immigrants, even more so their children, assimilate into the American culture--to the point you can't tell who is born of immigrant parents and who isn't. Looking at Sen. Marco Rubio, would anyone ever guess his parents were born in Cuba? It is the American attitude of inclusiveness of different religions and nationalities that has been our greatest protection against terrorists.

Not so in France and Belgium. Their immigrant population and their children are resentful how they and their parents have been segregated. Thus, Europe has become a fertile ground for radicalization and homegrown terrorists.

So for all of those who still can't understand why Obama and most Democrats will not use the term "Islamist terrorists" it's because we don't want homegrown terrorists in the United States. There are 3 or 4 million Muslims in America and we want them to feel welcome, not build bombs. We didn't use the term "Christian terrorist" for Terry Nichols and David Koresh, even though they were Christian, so we shouldn't use the term Islamist terrorist just because some nutcases happens to be Muslim.

That is why, when Americans are killed by terrorists, it's not by American Muslims – a little fact our electorate should take into consideration when looking at a ballot with Mr. Trump or Dr. Ben Carson's name on it. We don't want to start treating our migrants like they are treated throughout Europe or we will endure the same fate.

After the terrorists attacks Secretary of State John Kerry stated, "Tonight we are all Parisians." I could not disagree more.

Judicial Performance Commission Removes Saucedo from Office

The Commission on Judicial Performance has issued a decision and order removing

Judge Valeriano Saucedo, of the Tulare County Superior Court, from office. The commission's determination becomes final in 30 days, subject to discretionary review by the California

Supreme Court.

The commission ordered Judge Saucedo removed from office for a course of conduct toward his courtroom clerk that included manufacturing an anonymous letter that accused her in crude terms of having an affair with a court bailiff, using the letter and numerous gifts worth thousands of dollars in an attempt to pressure the clerk into a close, personal relationship, and providing legal advice to her son. After the clerk informed the judge that she was going to request a transfer from his department, he deposited $8,000 into her bank account. Later that day, during a court proceeding, the judge gave a note to the clerk, accusing her of extortion, in an attempt to intimidate the clerk and ensure her silence. Judge Saucedo denied writing the anonymous letter and the other essential facts of the case, blaming the clerk for his misconduct, and claiming he was only "mentoring" her. The commission found that significant portions of the judge's testimony lacked credibility.

The commission stated that "[t]he deceitful, calculated and unseemly nature of the judge's misconduct, compounded by his lack of candor in response to the commission's investigation and untruthful testimony under oath before the masters" compelled his removal from office. The commission found that the judge's highly improper course of conduct violated numerous canons of the Code of Judicial Ethics and was committed in bad faith. The commission found that some of the judge's conduct was undertaken in a judicial capacity and therefore constituted willful misconduct, the most serious constitutional basis for censure or removal of a judge. However, the commission stated that even if the judge had not been acting in a judicial capacity, "the entirety of his misconduct warrants removal." While recognizing and appreciating the judge's many contributions to his community and the legal profession, the commission concluded, "Certain misconduct is so completely at odds with the core qualities and role of a judge that no amount of mitigation can redeem the seriousness of the wrongdoing or obviate the need for removal in order to fulfill our mandate to protect the public, enforce high 2 standards of judicial conduct, and maintain public confidence in the integrity of the judiciary. This is such a case."

Viewpoint

Cal Water Corrects Misinformation Circulated by City of Visalia in Support of Takeover

California Water Service (Cal Water) released data on November 19 to show that the selective facts and figures in a "Citywide Update" document being used to support the City of Visalia's interest in a government takeover of the local water utility are misleading.

"In trying to justify its use of taxpayer dollars for an appraisal of our property, the City is spreading misinformation," Cal Water spokesperson Shannon Dean said. "Their commentary on our rates doesn't tell the whole story."

Dean said Cal Water's rates reflect the costs of providing a safe, reliable water supply and high-quality customer service. The water rate snapshot in the Citywide Update doesn't reflect the differences between water providers and their levels of water system investment, service, and water quality. As an example, some of the cities in Visalia's rate comparison table have numerous water quality violations. Simple rate comparisons taken out of context also fail to factor in other sources of revenue, such as property tax assessments and utility user taxes, which subsidize water rates.

The City's rate comparison also fails to address the fact that rates are going up everywhere in California, and in fact, have been rising in many neighboring communities faster than in Visalia. The average customer in Visalia pays a little more than a dollar per day, which is less than 1% of the average Visalia household income, for a safe, reliable water supply.

"Public agencies often charge less by providing lower levels of service and deferring critical infrastructure improvements, as well as by underfunding employee pensions. But even if the City Council wished to replicate this poor model, it couldn't. The indisputable fact is that a government takeover would result in higher taxes and/or higher water rates."

Cal Water saved its most critical comments for the City's claim that the company hasn't done enough to help residents conserve. Dean noted that through nearly $2 million invested in industry-leading conservation programs, Cal Water has helped its customers save almost 900 million gallons of water. Total water use in Visalia in 2014 was 3% lower than in 2001, despite the fact that the population has grown by more than 35%.

"The City has asked us to fine and penalize customers more heavily for not meeting conservation targets, and we have said no. They've also asked us to violate our customers' privacy by revealing information about our highest water-using customers so that the City could fine them, and we have said no. Instead, we have taken a customer-first approach and are working hand-in-hand with customers to meet our water savings goals," Dean said. "In addition to providing a robust variety of conservation programs, rebates, and educational materials (www.calwater.com), we have offered incentive programs and even gone door-to-door in higher-use areas."

About two-thirds of Visalia customers are meeting their conservation targets. According to Dean, customers should be thanked for their efforts, not fined.

"The bottom line is that City leaders are citing select facts and omitting information in their effort to foment a government takeover of water utility property – a goal that will only lead to higher water rates, higher taxes, and lower quality water and service. We look forward to providing our customers with the facts that show that what the City is doing is not in the best interests of the people of Visalia."

Cal Water serves about 132,200 people through 42,400 service connections in Visalia. The company has provided water service in the area since 1927. Additional information may be obtained online at www.calwater.com.

FACT CHECK

The City of Visalia is cherry-picking data and providing misleading information to try to justify wasting taxpayer's money on a study for use in a government takeover of Cal Water's property. The City's plan would cost hundreds of millions of dollars, and result in higher taxes and/or water rates for decades.

City Claim: Since 2011, water rates charged by Cal Water have increased too much.

The Truth: The cost of water service in Visalia is set by an independent state agency to ensure that water rates are justified and reasonable.

- The typical residential customer bill increased from $32 in 2011 to $38 in 2015, or 20 cents more per day.
- Cal Water's current rate proposal would increase the typical residential bill to $42 in 2019 if it were adopted in full.
- This represents a bill increase of around 3% per year from 2011-2019. Cal Water has proposed to increase rates to send money to San Jose Cal Water is investing in Visalia's future by ensuring that the water system remains safe and reliable, for decades to come.
- Cal Water has invested more than $15 million in Visalia District system improvements in the last three years.
- Despite the City's claims, Cal Water's investments in system improvement represent a huge flow of money from San Jose into the Visalia area.
- Cal Water has proposed to invest more than $15 million into the water system between 2015 and 2019, including replacing more than 33,000 feet of aging water pipes
- To offset the cost of those investments, the typical customer's water bill would increase by about $2.26 per month, on average, between 2017 and 2019

City Claim: Cal Water's customers pay more for water service than residents in other cities.

The Truth: Simplistic comparisons of the cost of water service are misleading; there are too many differences between water systems that affect the cost of water service. When these differences are accounted for, monthly water bills in Visalia are comparable to those of neighboring communities.

- Cal Water doesn't charge the same non-recurring fees as nearby utilities do
- Cal Water doesn't get any transfers from the City's general fund
- Cal Water makes prudent investments into the water system to help ensure it remains safe and reliable Cal Water isn't committed to water conservation.

Even if the City doesn't agree, Cal Water is proud of the efforts its customers have made to reduce their water use during this historic drought. Cal Water is committed to ensuring they have a reliable supply of water for years to come.

- Cal Water has an industry-leading water conservation program. Since 2010, it has invested nearly $2 million on water conservation in Visalia, and those programs will save almost 900 million gallons of water
- In 2014, Visalians used less water than they did in 2001, despite a 35% increase in population. Our customers have saved even more in 2015 in response to the drought emergency.
- Instead of supporting its conservation efforts, in the last general rate case the City wanted to slash Cal Water's conservation budget by 64% and cut funding for Cal Water's school education program by 50%
- Cal Water has made over 3.2 billion gallons of water it had banked available for groundwater recharge projects in Visalia

The Aftermath of Paris

Robert C. Koehler

I'm sitting in the aftermath of Paris, feeling emotions tear me apart. One of the emotions is joy. My daughter, who lives there, is safe.

Has "joy" ever felt so troubling?

The aftermath of Paris seems likely to be intensified ("pitiless") bombing raids in Syria, closed borders, heightened fear-based security and the deletion of "the gray zones of coexistence" across the planet.

Oh, it's so nice to have an enemy who is truly evil! The logic of war is so seductive. It simplifies all these complex emotions. Just watch the news.

The news is that terror wins. Indeed, terror is the cornerstone of civilization.

I couldn't get that notion out of my head. That's because I couldn't stop thinking about an act of extraordinary terror that took place a little more than a dozen years ago, and its relevance to the world's current state of shock and chaos. Doing so made it impossible to contemplate the raw savagery of the ISIS killings in Paris and Beirut and everywhere else — the "my God!" of it all, as innocent lives are cut short with such indifference — in a simplistic context of us vs. them.

In March of 2003, the U.S. launched its invasion of Iraq with a bombing campaign called "Shock and Awe," consisting of some 1,700 air sorties over the country that killed, according to Iraq Body Count, more than 7,400 civilians.

We launched our war on Iraq with the intent to commit terror on a scale ISIS could only dream of. The relevance of this is inescapable, not simply because it makes the United States and NATO brothers in terror with ISIS, but also because the war shattered Iraq and caused the death and displacement of millions more people and, ultimately, created the conditions in which ISIS was able to come to power.

What's haunting to me is the absence of this shockingly relevant recent history from most mainstream coverage of the Paris killings — or more to the point, the absence of almost any sort of trans-war consciousness, you might say, from the discussion of what we ought to do next.

Considering that bombing campaigns, and war itself, are not only the equivalent of terror ("writ large") but also wildly ineffective and counterproductive, producing, in the long term, pretty much the opposite of what rational, non-war-mongers crave, the failure of politicians and mainstream media types to reach beyond a riled militarism in their reaction to the Dark Ages terror in which ISIS specializes bodes poorly, I fear, for the future of humanity.

My daughter, who last Friday night had been at a rehearsal for an upcoming poetry event, found herself, at 10 p.m., as she was leaving a tavern called Les Caves St.-Sabin, in the middle of the chaos. As she and her friends stepped into the street, someone came running past warning people to get back inside. They only learned, in bits and pieces, the enormity of what was still happening in their city. She spent the night at the tavern, a decorated basement that felt, she said, like a "medieval fallout shelter." In the morning, the Metro was running again, and she returned to her apartment. Only then did the horror hit her with full ferocity. She sat and cried, then got up and went to work.

However, the tears continue, if only in silence. The Paris tears are a small tributary to a worldwide River of Sorrow that swells beyond Paris and beyond Europe and the West to the broken, bombed, war-ravaged nations of the Third and Fourth World, the source of the planet's 60 million refugees. This is the world of ISIS. Instead of continuing to bomb this world, in our fear and anger, we could try to understand it.

"ISIS is the first group since Al Qaeda to offer these young men a way to defend their dignity, family, and tribe."

So wrote Lydia Wilson, a research fellow at the Centre for the Resolution of Intractable Conflict at Oxford University, in a recent piece for The Nation. She and her colleagues, in an attempt to do just that — understand those who have given over their lives to ISIS — recently interviewed ISIS prisoners of war in Iraq and, in the process, found their humanity. Mostly they were young men in their 20s who grew up in the wake of the American occupation of Iraq; that is to say, in the midst of brutal civil war.

"The Americans came," one of them told her. "They took away Saddam, but they also took away our security. I didn't like Saddam, we were starving then, but at least we didn't have war. When you came here, the civil war started."

Violence begets violence; war begets war. Knowing this is the starting place. It is time to start over.

Robert Koehler, syndicated by PeaceVoice, is a Chicago award-winning journalist and editor.

Comments & Letters

Hello Political Fix

I am dumbfounded. Again, you are going after my man, Ben Carson, the most genuine and honorable man I've seen.. I don't get your triviality and complete lack of proportion. Did I some how miss him being called before a Congressional hearing ? I guess the half dozen books on the Clintons and their crimes are fiction. I can only guess at your belief system that would drive such fervor and lack of proportionality.

Two statements attracted me to Libertarianism. 1. Thou shall not coerce (a high bar). Also, 2. No one comes into this world with a mortgage on the life of another (Rand). Since you defend Obamacare you must believe that a Right is something a large group can have by taking from others who disagree. That is slavery. Tell me, were there any lives lost by veterans in their health care system ? Obamacare is based on many similar lies and the worst is yet to come.

So called progressives think that a special job and talent of government is to make money matters easier. In reality it is nothing more than perverse incentives, co-dependency and ghetto building. They tout that "We're a nation of immigrants" as if the current situation with over 90% receiving welfare is the "traditional' way. Are your five children OK with paying the bill for government doing your social (church) work ? Sooner or later, bad or worse, an intervention is coming. Like the phone, freedom of enterprise can handle it, Carson knows

Sincerely,
Stephen Crigler

Catherine Doe,

I loved your article you wrote on the 15th of October in the political fix. You boldly called out republican reactions to Benghazi as being politicized, and not about a state department head lying over and over again about a video instead of admitting she failed to protect our ambassador. Also bringing it to every ones attention that over 33,000 Americans are killed by guns every year, but accidentally omit that over two thirds of those were suicides. Then you brilliantly point out that an economist says that states with tighter gun control laws have fewer gun related deaths. Lets not tell anyone that Chicago, a city with no gun shops because of strict laws, had double the murders than the entire state of Texas!

Did you know that the wonderful country of Mexico outlawed guns for its citizens, and only 1,621 people were murdered in August alone! I would ask you, if you were about to be a victim of a violent crime, are you going to call your local ACLU rep or are you going to call a policeman to show up with a gun to make you safe? Thank you anyway for showing me why this paper is free, because much like NPR, nobody would ever pay to read such one sided narrow views on taking away our constitutional rights.

Sincerely,
The Silent Majority

ISIS Represents Fundamentalist Islam

Dear Mr. Oldenbourg,

Kudos for your focus on possible problems in local law enforcement agencies. As law officers have greater power and responsibilities than the typical person they need to be held to a very high standard of morality, ethics, and performance. Keep the light shining!

Islam means "submission" not peace unfortunately--submission to Allah and the word of Allah's prophet, Mohammed. After 9/11 I looked up Mohammed's life in the encyclopedia Britannica. I was horrified--he was a man of violence and warfare who in his lifetime unified the Arabs through persuasion and force. For instance when a Jewish community refused to submit and co-operate he had all the men beheaded and parceled out the women, children and property to his followers. Upon Mohammed's death portions of the Arab peoples decided to break away from Mohammed's disciples' rule. They were vanquished by violence, the Arabs re-unified (I believe they were called the Wars of Apostasy). Then Mohammed's first generation disciples went on a war of conquest to bring the rest of what we call the Middle East into submission. A right to rape non-Muslim captive women was part of all this. ISIS is merely following WWMD--"What Would Mohammed Do."

Contrast this with what Jesus' first generation disciples did (Peter, John and so on) peaceful persuasion via word, deed, example, and miracles. Christianity didn't wield political power or violence for three centuries. It was corrupted like any human group can be by being given access to political and social power. Violence isn't part of the original template of Christianity. When Christians return to the root of their faith they return to words, prayer, good deeds, and example as their means of persuasion. When Muslims return to the historical roots of their faith they return to the above but include violence as part of the method. People are extremely ignorant of the violence perpetrated by Islam in history. Have you heard of the "Hindu Holocaust"--the millions of Hindus slaughtered in the conquest of India by Muslims? The Barbary Pirates justified the attacks on American and European shipping as their religious right based on the words of the Koran and Mohammed.

There are versions of Islam that are peaceful and coexistent--Sufism, for instance, but they are later developments.

The present leader or "Caliph" of ISIS has assumed "Abu Bakr" as part of his name. Abu Bakr was the first leader after Mohammed's death. He defeated the rebellious Arab tribes in the War of Apostasy and then started the conquest of the Middle East. It is an obvious harkening back to the beginning of Islam.

Sincerely,
Jeff Alexander

"With skeletons still in their closets, it's gonna look like a scene from "The Walking Dead," once the disturbing information about certain law enforcement officials & persons of judicial power becomes public knowledge…

When the victims have been avenged, it's going to make revenge seem like a cake walk.

Everyone deserves the truth & justice."

— ***Jenny** on **FPPC Complaint Filed Against Tulare County Sheriff Boudreaux***

"I would suggest that a good start in Chief Hensley's quest for community outreach would be to make the community more welcomed at the Police Station itself. When one enters Tulare's police station you are not met by a human being. It is a small dark closed off room and one must speak through a wall phone to an unseen person on the other side of the closed off wall. This furthers the belief that the police is afraid for their own safety in the community….it is safe enough for we the people but not safe enough for the police thus promoting an "us against them" mentality to thrive among the ranks. If you want to have a greater presence in the community then a good place to start would be at the very hub of interaction between the police dept. and citizens (like it used to be years ago). Used to be that if there was a problem then one would go to the police station to seek help but when you can't even physically see a police officer in that building why would one ever think about turning to them for assistance. Need to speak to a policeman then place a phone call and wait hours for one to actually show up at your home. That place now says we need to protect ourselves against the community because they are all out to get us. How sad!"

— ***Barbara** on **Hensley Begins Permanent Position as Tulare Police Chief***

"Gun raffles, financial mis-filings, deputies extorting sex and money, union money embezzlement, missing narcotics buy funds, beating up neighbors on TV, misdemeanor vehicular manslaughter, spending government money on church events, having sex with CI's….the list goes on and on. But we have high standards. And we have a cartoon mascot. Things are Great!!"

— ***Tired** on **FPPC Complaint Filed Against Tulare County Sheriff Boudreaux***

Veteran's Corner

Medical Care vs. Claims

Joe Wright

Most veterans have a lot of misunderstanding with how the VA functions and thus are confused when dealing with the VA for both compensation claims and/or getting medical treatment. Hospitals, clinics, Vet Centers and such provide treatment. They work under their own guidelines, regulations, and budgets.

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) confers compensation/service connection for military related illnesses and injuries, and other commonly known benefits such as home loan guarantees and education. As an example - Going to the Fresno Vets Center for PTSD does not automatically request service connection for PTSD, nor does it automatically guarantee service connection and compensation.

A formal claim for compensation and service connection of a medical problem must be made in order to receive compensation. This is a service our office provides. In order to have a medical problem service connected and compensation paid, there must be evidence of a chronic medical issue being linked to a veteran's active military service. Evidence most frequently comes from military service records, especially medical records. When these are missing, evidence can come from other sources such as witnesses, photos, news stories, and letters to home.

Generally, a claim for benefits or an increase in benefits specifically must be made by the veteran. A visit to a medical facility should not be considered by a veteran to be a claim of any sort, even if a staff member/employee states there is one.

Medical treatment at a VA treatment facility does not confer the status of service connection on a medical problem. Service connection is the legal status conferred on a claim that is made only by the VBA and only after a rating decision has been completed.

The Kings County Veterans Service Office can complete the DMV Veteran Status Verification Form for the new California Veteran Designation on your driver's license. We also issue Veteran I.D. cards to honorably discharged veterans. Contact Joe Wright if you would like to receive periodic veteran's information by email.

There are many state and federal benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents. To find out if you are eligible for any of these benefits, visit or call our office. We can and will assist you in completing all required application forms. You can get information on the Web from the Kings County Veterans Service Office webpage at www.countyofkings.com/vets.

Joe Wright, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Service Officer for Kings County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 1400 W. Lacey Blvd, Hanford, CA 93230; call (559)852-2669; or e-mail joe.wright@co.kings.ca.us.

New Congregate Living Facility Opens in Springville

Jan M. Krafve

Tulare County welcomes its newest subacute care facility, Sierra Care at the Lake. Located in Springville, this new congregate care living facility had its first residents move in on December 1.

Nestled in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, the facility hopes to become the first choice of both physicians and patients in the region.

"Our mission is to be the premier 24-hour congregate living facility dedicated to serve, help and enhance the quality of life and well-being of our residents," said Joel Vargas, marketing and outreach manager.

Sierra Care at the Lake features one-on-one personalized nursing and rehabilitative treatments for patients suffering with spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury, neuromuscular conditions, congenital conditions, or other complex injuries.

Residents are cared for by a quality team of professionals including physicians, nurses, a registered dietician, pharmacist, social worker and activity coordinator. The facility also has available physical, occupational, speech and respiratory therapists on an as-needed basis, for its residents. Arrangements can also be made for other medical specialists such as dentists and podiatrists.

"We treat our residents with respect, dignity and compassion," said Vargas. "It is those values that are our guiding principles and serves as a foundation for who we are."

The land on which the facility resides was originally developed in the late 1930's. The property had been a longtime popular landmark for recreational activities. It features beautiful views of the mountains and overlooks a private lake encompassed in a park-like setting, offering a peaceful and tranquil place for residents.

Sierra Care at the Lake boasts a new, 4,500-square-foot, state-of-the-art medical facility, along with many other upscale amenities. There are eight private rooms and two double rooms, accommodating up to 12 residents at any given time.

There is a large activity room and family dining room for residents and their guests. The kitchen staff is trained to provide meals and snacks according to dietary needs, along with personal preferences.

Much care has been taken to provide residents with a cozy, home-like atmosphere.

For more information visit hello@sierracare.com, or call (559) 539-1100.

The new Springville care facility, Sierra Care at the Lake, has a tranquil feeling with has its own private lake and a view of the Sierra Nevada. Courtesy/Sierra Care at the Lake

Sierra Care at the Lake has eight private rooms and two double rooms with one-on-one personalized nursing care. Courtesy/Sierra Care at the Lake

YOU'RE INVITED TO A FREE TWO DAY SUMMIT

Working Together to Build Change

BEYOND THE TALK-
PRACTICING THE WALK:

Building the Bridge from Barriers to Equity & Success for Under-Represented Student Groups

DECEMBER 10 & 11 - Porterville Fairgrounds

The summit is designed to maximize culturally responsible agencies and institutions by deepening the dialogue across systems and communities; building new partnerships and learning about innovative outreach strategies and learning about available resources, support services, and much more. Attendees will engage in conversations about becoming more culturally sensitive in supporting student success for the following populations: African-Americans, Asian Pacific Islander, Latinos, LGBTQ and Native American. The summit will also address groups such as: ESL/Basic Skills, foster youth, low income, those with disabilities, and veterans.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND:
- Community Leaders
- Health and Human Services
- K-12 Educators
- Law Enforcement
- Faith Based Organizations
- Mental Health Services
- Juvenile Justice
- Public Health Officials
- Group Home Providers
- City and County Agencies
- Community Based Organizations

FEATURED SPEAKERS:
- Dr. Gustavo Loera, Educational and Mental Health Policy Researcher Center for Reducing Health Disparities, UC Davis
- Dr. Jamillah Moore, Vice Chancellor for Educational Services and Planning for San Mateo County Community College District
- Dee Hankins, Inspiring CHANGE and Igniting HOPE

REGISTER ONLINE AT
www.portervillecollege.edu

All attendees must be pre-registered.

Please indicate if you need special accommodations when registering

PORTERVILLE COLLEGE
Student Equity

Working Families Success Network

Porterville Fairgrounds, 2700 W. Teapot Dome Ave., Porterville, CA 93257

Valley Voice
Valley Scene
3 December, 2015

Kingston Trio Tribute Comes to Lindsay

Staff Reports

The Lindsay Community Theater proudly presents a "Salute to the Kingston Trio" starring the Country Line Trio on Saturday December 5. This highly entertaining show provides a nostalgic trip down memory lane with the great hits of the Kingston Trio and other popular folk favorites along with a generous helping of comedic banter.

Celebrating 45 years together, the County Line Trio have opened shows for the late Pat Paulsen, troubadour Glenn Yarbrough and singer/songwriter and former member of the Kingston Trio, the late John Stewart.

Remember "Tom Dooley," "Charlie on the MTA," "Scotch and Soda," "Worried Man" and "Where Have All The Flowers Gone?" These and many other great folk music classics are blended with delightful banter, jokes and just cutting-up and having fun.

For the past 45 years, the County Line Trio has performed in numerous venues, from the nightclub stage, music festivals, corporate functions and private parties, to the concert stage. They have always been welcomed by enthusiastic audiences, eager to take that nostalgic trip back to the days when everyone exercised their vocal cords, tapped their toes and clapped along to the familiar refrains of the great folk hits.

The County Line Trio is currently comprised of Tod Brendlen, Bob Lawrence and Dean Hammer and for the past 45 plus years have developed a very entertaining act. Member Bud Olsen has currently been sidelined with some personal issues.

The performance is at 7:30. General admission is $20. For tickets and info, visit www.lindsaycommunitytheater.com. Tickets can also be purchased at the door.

In case you have forgotten, here are a few of the Kingston Trio hits:

- Tom Dooley,
- Lemon Tree,
- This Land is Your Land,
- Seasons in the Sun,
- They Call the Wind Maria,
- Scotch and Soda,
- The Tijuana Jail,
- Where Have All the Flowers Gone?,
- Scarlet Ribbons,
- The Reverend Mr. Black,
- Try To Remember,
- Greenback Dollar,
- It Was a Very Good Year,
- 500 Miles,
- It Takes A Worried Man,
- Across The Wide Missouri,
- The River Is Wide,
- M.T.A., &
- Blowin' In The Wind.

The County Line Trio

Nick, played by Thom Crowe, in a scene at dinner with his grandparents. Courtesy/Ice House

Over the River and Through the Woods

Irene Morse

This time of year, most of us want to connect with our families and feel nostalgia for a simpler time. A grandparent is usually included in our daydream. If this condition sounds familiar, don't miss the next production presented by the Visalia Community Players at the Ice House Theatre, "Over the River and Through the Woods."

This family play, written by Joe DiPietro in 1998, is one that is still topical and relatable by nearly everyone. As one of the actors put it, "I believe that audiences will experience their own family emotions coming to the surface" during this show.

There is a young man, being held hostage in the loving arms of his four grandparents. Although they pamper and coo over him, he is expected to show up for Sunday dinner every week, and the idea that he might move across the country for a career promotion propels devious aging minds into action.

Nick, is the only family member still residing within the radius of his cloying grandparents. He loves them and enjoys these Sunday dinners with them. This promotion, however, is too good to pass up and he chooses a Sunday family dinner to make his announcement. Thom Crowe portrays the conflicted grandson. Nick enjoys visiting with his grandparents, although he wishes they might lower the temperature in the house a few degrees, and he likes that the family follows the Three Fs: Faith, Family, and Food.

Sunday dinner is always at the home of Aida and Frank Gianelli, Nancy Holley and Keith Lindersmith. Other grandparents, Emma and Nunzio Cristano, played by Karen Simpson and Karl Schoettler, are always there as well.

The grandparents are nobody's fools and suspect what Nick is up to. In a concerted effort to derail his plans, Emma invites young Caitlin, "the unmarried niece of my canasta partner," to dinner as well. If these septuagenarian schemers have anything to do with it, Cupid will take care of the rest. Caitlin Hill takes on this cute and romantic role.

The Players presented this show 10 years ago. Although he was not directly involved in that production, director Donny Graham states that he was feeling nostalgia for the story.

He mused that his perspective has somewhat changed over these years. Donny looks back now as "an aging person" and wonders how his younger family members look at him. He hopes they will come to the show and say, "Oh, yeah, that's a bit like Papa," and smile.

Lindersmith directed "Over the River and Through the Woods," when it was last performed at the Ice House. Because each director is different, and each brings his own creativity to a project, Lindersmith reports that this production "has more action, but the same 'feel good' character" as the first one.

The themes of the show are universal. As Nick is trying to announce that he is leaving, Aida presses one bulging plate of food after another on him. At last, in frustration, he blurts out, "This is a one-sentence announcement. You don't have to cater it!"

Over the River and Through the Woods opens at the Ice House Theater at Race and Santa Fe in Visalia at 7:30pm on Friday, December 4, 2015 and runs for three weekends with evening performances at 7:30pm on December 5, 11, 12, 18 and 19, and matinees at 2pm on December 6, 13 and 20.

For more information about the Visalia Community Players and to purchase tickets, visit www.visaliaplayers.org. Tickets may also be purchased by calling 734-3900.

Tulare County Symphony Presents Annual Holiday Concert

Staff Reports

The Tulare County Symphony's annual holiday concert is designed to be family friendly with traditional holiday tunes such as "Winter Wonderland" and the "Hallelujah Chorus" along with some new pieces such as "Miracle on 34th Street" and "Christmas Eve/Sarajevo 12/24."

The latter is a medley of "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" and "Carol of the Bells" telling about a forgotten Christmas carol in war-torn Sarajevo.

The concert will be performed twice—at 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 5.

The concert traditionally features local musicians. This year Hope Garcia will sing "All I Want for Christmas Is You," and Brandon Pasion will sing "Holly Jolly Christmas" and "Hannukah Blessings."

Flutiest Tracy Harris will play "Sleigh Ride" and the El Diamante High School Choir and a large children's choir will also perform.

An annual treat is always a young singer with Tulare Encore Kids belting out "I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas," this year sung by Isabella Caso.

Tickets are $30 to $39.50 at the symphony office, 208 W. Main Street, Suite D, Visalia, downstairs in Montgomery Square. Student prices are $10.

Tickets are also available at 732-8600 or go to www.tularecountysymphony.com.

Richard Elloyan and Steve Wade. Courtesy/Mavericks Coffee House

Richard Elloyan to Play Mavericks Dec. 12

Staff Reports

Mavericks Coffee House welcomes back Richard Elloyan on December 12 at 7pm. Elloyan's special guest will be Steve Wade. It's been a few years since Elloyan has played at Mavericks. The singer/songwriter from Carson City, Nevada is a songwriter's songwriter. Some of the more well known entertainers out on the Cowboy Sawdust Trail have recorded his songs. Elloyan's songwriting collaborator, Dave Stamey, our multiple award-winning one-man House Band says of him: He "is a songwriter with so much talent, it should be illegal!"

Elloyan was raised in Virginia City. After a stint in the US Navy, he attended the University of Nevada -Reno, where he studied Range Management. That resulted in his working for the US Bureau of Land Management and the US Forestry Service. Today, he travels the highways of Nevada as an Environmental Health Specialist.

Steve Wade, an accomplished guitarist, raises and trains Arabian horses in the Washoe Valley.

Elloyan has eight albums to his credit. The most recent is Forty Miles of Famous, whose title track, was selected in 2014, by the Reno Gazette Journal, as the Best New Local Music Original Song from 43 entries considered.

Tickets, $25, are on sale now. Stop by Mavericks Coffee House, 238 E. Caldwell Avenue, Visalia, to pick them up. Or call 559 624-1400 for tickets.... Visa/MC accepted. Doors open at 6pm and the show is at 7pm. Seating is limited.

Festival of Trees

Darlene Mayfield

On Thursday November 19th the foothill community of Three Rivers and neighboring communities showed what the "Power of Giving" is all about. Over 400 guests attended the first ever Festival of Trees hosted by St. Anthony's Retreat Center.

During the evening guests enjoyed appetizers provided by the Chefs at the Retreat Center and the "World Famous" Gateway Restaurant.

Local wineries supplied the wine that was poured and sampled from Commemorative Wine glasses sponsored by Cru Winery as a take home token of their appreciation.

One of the finest brewers in the Valley was pouring generous samples of his finest micro-brews for the guests' enjoyment. It was a great opportunity for Brewer Kenny Hildebrand to showcase his brewing talent and introduce some new varieties.

Over 30 non-profits participated in the event, with either a silent auction item or an artificial "Live Auction Tree"

Highlighting the evening, Justin Martella--the Auctioneer and Master of Ceremonies--made his way through the crowd and from tree to tree guests were bidding from their hearts and their commitment to the non-profit they came to support.

The generosity of the crowd exceeded our expectations, the evening brought over $29,000 to support the local charities that participated.

The Festival of Trees committee is already hard at work planning next year's event. For more information about participating or for further information about St. Anthony's Retreat Center call 559 561 4595 or view their website at http://www.stanthonyretreatorg/.

Great Conversations

Our Ability to Pay: Veblen and Conspicuous Consumption

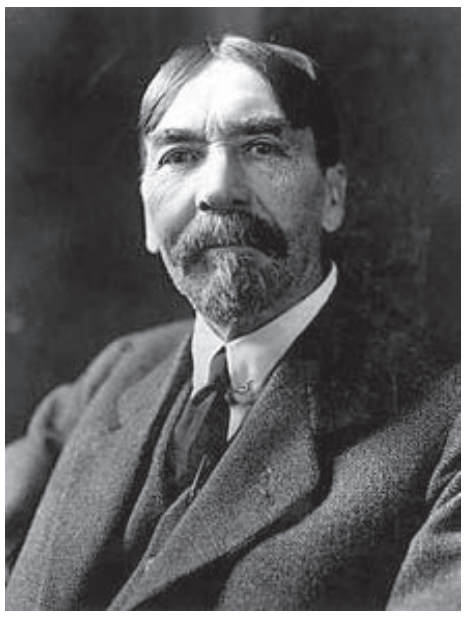
Joseph R. Teller

How much did you spend this Black Friday? Perhaps you decided to stay in rather than brave the post-Thanksgiving consumerist orgy. Even if you didn't go shopping, according to *The Washington Post,* over 151 million Americans spent an average of $299 each last weekend.

But whether or not we shopped, whenever we do purchase something—even food—what, exactly, are our motives? Is the purchase something we need to subsist, or is it something we want? And why do we want it? What purpose does it serve in our lives or in the lives of others?

These questions emerged from COS's latest great books discussion last week, during which we discussed excerpts from Thorstein Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899). In this magisterial book, Veblen argues that the modern "leisure class" emerges directly from earlier "barbaric" cultures that reached a state of development in which some people were freed from the toils of basic subsistence, and could thus "exploit" the "industry" of others.

Early in societal development, Veblen argues, "the activities of the primitive social group tend to fall into two classes, which would in modern phrase be called exploit and industry." Eventually, the group that exploits the industry of others produces a dynamic of "invidious comparison": they demonstrate their successful exploitation by amassing more goods (in early societies, war trophies, wives, weapons, and the like), and, in a later societal phase, showing that they do not have to labor like others.



Thorstein Veblen

As a society industrializes, Veblen says, "employment in industry becomes correspondingly odious, and…
the handling of the tools and implements of industry falls beneath the dignity of able-bodied men. Labor becomes irksome."

The modern "leisure class" is the culmination of this anthropological development. Historically, the leisure class—freed from subsistence—demonstrates its dominance by conspicuous leisure and conspicuous consumption of luxury goods: "The consumption of luxuries… is a consumption directed to the comfort of the consumer himself, and is, therefore, a mark of the master."

And the bigger the leisure class, the more wasteful conspicuous consumption has to be to display the social status of the consumer. Indeed, "taste" and "good manners" also become modes of "invidious comparison" (perhaps the subtleties of wine tasting or the smoking of expensive cigars or the purchase of a loaded BMW or Prius are good contemporary examples).

Additionally, the leisure class is divided into multiple strata, according to Veblen, and each stratum imitates the acquisition habits and tastes of the stratum immediately above it. Thus, the modern "business man" (of the early 1900s) toils in order to have the means to display his buying power and to allow his wife conspicuous leisure time, while even "the most abjectly poor" will endure "much of squalor and discomfort… before this last trinket or the last pretense of pecuniary decency is put away." For all members of the leisure class, "the only practicable means of impressing one's pecuniary ability on…unsympathetic observers of one's everyday life is an unremitting demonstration of ability to pay."

Veblen is not without his blind spots. In his squarely materialist analysis, he does not account for human motives such as love, self-sacrifice, or even play, for instance. Nor does he define what kinds of acquisitions are necessary for "human life on the whole" and those that are purely "wasteful" (and thus conspicuous). But overall, the group found much of Veblen applicable to modern American life.

Whatever our economic motives, Veblen invites us—and this is a great time of year to accept the invitation—to examine them: does my purchase enhance basic human life as a whole? Is it something I need? Do I buy to be *seen* buying in a certain way, or to make a statement about myself? And perhaps the most fraught questions of all—who produces what I buy, and what effects does my purchase have on society and other members of it?

OPENING THE COLLEGE DOOR

A College Transition Workshop

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

Parents, Young Adults, College Faculty, High School Teachers, and Service Providers

The transition from school to adulthood is pivotal in the lives of all students. For a student with a disability, the transition from high school to the world of adulthood can seem overwhelming. However, with thoughtful planning, this transition can lead to postsecondary opportunities and meaningful employment.

This **FREE** conference will provide information and resources about community college and support services for students with learning and other disabilities. Presentations will focus on using technology to improve executive functioning, increasing campus social connections, the importance of self-advocacy, and planning the transition from high school to college.

SAVE THE DATE

PORTERVILLE COLLEGE

Saturday, December 12, 2015

9:00AM – 2:00PM

Register online at

www.portervillecollege.edu.

Funded by the

California Community College Student Equity Program &

Working Families Success Network

Calendar

Mondays: Bridge Club, 9:30am-2pm
210 W Center Street Visalia, CA 93291 Admission is free. For additional information call: Joan Dinwiddie @ 732-0855

Mondays: Knitters, 10am-12:30pm
210 W Center Street Visalia, CA 93291. Everyone's welcome.

Fridays: Women's Morning Bible Study, 9am-Noon
210 W Center Street Visalia, CA 93291. For additional information call: 739-9010

1st and 3rd Thursdays: Central Valley Tea Party Meetings, 6pm
819 West Visalia Road, Farmersville.

Through January 3: "Hidden in the Leaves" Arts Exhibition
The Arts Alliance of Three Rivers is excited to present "Hidden in the Leaves" arts exhibition. Uncover autumn's abundance of artistry and imagination at our 2015-2016 Fall-Winter art show. Opening on November 3rd thru January 3rd at 41717 Sierra Drive Three Rivers. Open daily (except Monday) 10am to 5pm. Artist receptions will be held on 1st Saturday, November 7, December 5 and January 2 from 11am to 2:30pm. Sponsors include Arts Alliance of Three Rivers, Sierra Subs and Salads and 1st Saturday of Three Rivers. For additional information call 559 967-8281.

DECEMBER

December 3: "Bright Lights, Christmas Delights"
Porterville Children's Christmas Parade, 7pm Route from Morton down Main Street to Olive – contact, Porterville Chamber of Commerce, (559) 784-7502.

December 4: Central Valley Parkinson's Support Group Meeting, 10:30am
In the pre school center of Visalia United Methodist Church located at 5200 West Caldwell in Visalia. Annual holiday program featuring live music. Join us for lunch and good conversation after the meeting: www.cvpsg.net or cvparkinsons@gmail.com or 559-563-0725

December 4: Exeter's Christmas Parade, "A Christmas Vacation," 6:30pm
The parade will be December 4th at 6:30pm in downtown Exeter. For more information, call Community Services at (559) 562-5262. Return all entry forms to Community Services at 137 N. "F" Street.

December 5: Woodlake FFA Alumni Boosters Turkey Shoot Fundraiser, 9am
On Saturday, December 5th, 2015, the Woodlake FFA Alumni Boosters will be hosting a Turkey Shoot Fundraiser at the Woodlake Lions Rodeo Grounds. Competition will begin promptly at 9am and conclude at 3pm. Shooters are encouraged to bring their own ammunition. A raffle and concessions will be available to support the FFA program. If you have any questions please contact the Woodlake High School Agriculture Department staff or visit our website at woodlakeffa.com.

December 5: Legislative Community Coffee, 10:30am-Noon
State Senator Andy Vidak, Tulare County Sheriff Mike Boudreaux and Porterville Mayor Stowe offer coffee and conversation at Sierra Hills Retirement Home, 2500 West Henderson Avenue in Porterville.

December 5: Lemon Cove Women's Club Annual Bake Sale, Bazaar & Luncheon, 11am
The bazaar opens at 11am, with luncheon at noon. Door prizes. At 32792 Sierra Dr. (Hwy. 198) in Lemon Cove's historic Pogue Hotel. $15 per person. Proceeds help maintain and upgrade the hotel. For reservations call 597-1416 or 597-2459.

December 5: Exeter Kiwanis Presents the 24th Annual "Spirit of the Holidays," 4-7pm
Exeter Kiwanis presents The 24th Annual "Spirit of the Holidays," Saturday December 5th from 4 to 7pm at the Exeter Memorial Building, 324 N. Kaweah. There will be excellent Wine Tasting, Hors d'oeuvres, raffle, silent auction and a Live Christmas Tree Auction. Tickets are $50 each. For more information, call the Exeter Chamber of Commerce at (559) 592-2919.

December 5: Community Caroling, 5-7pm
At the Three Rivers Museum. Join us for Old-Fashioned Caroling! Hot chocolate, Coffee, S'mores, Real Campfire. And, of course Santa might just stop by! Help us with the local Bread Basket food pantry. Bring a non-perishable food item. If you want to sit down, bring a chair. Bring a flash light to read the song book. For more information call 559-561-2707.

December 5: Dinuba Christmas Light Parade , 5:30pm
Contact Dinuba Community Services, (559) 591-5900.

December 5: Lemoore Christmas Parade, 6pm
"The Night Before Christmas in a Galaxy Far, Far Away." Downtown Lemoore, D Street.

December 5: Salute to the Kingston Trio, 7:30pm
The Lindsay Community Theater proudly presents a "Salute to the Kingston Trio" starring the County Line Trio.

This highly entertaining show provides a nostalgic trip down memory lane with the great hits of the Kingston Trio.

For tickets and info, please go to lindsaycommunitytheater.com. Tickets can also be purchased at the door.

December 6: Breakfast With Santa, 8am-Noon
At the Lemoore Recreation Center, 721 W. Cinnamon Dr. Breakfast includes ham, eggs, pancakes and juice. Presented by the Lemoore Lions Club and the Lemoore Recreation Department. Tickets are $8 for adults and $5 for children aged 5-12. Children under 5 are free. Pictures with Santa are $5. For more information call 924-6767.

December 6: 60th Anniversary Of The Kaweah River Flood, 1:30pm
Join us at the Three Rivers Veteran's Memorial Building on Sunday, December 6th to see and hear about floods from John Austin, author of "Floods & Droughts" and talk with Mark Tilchen about his book on "Floods of the Kaweah" then listen to some of our local folks that were here during the flood. Tom Marshall Telephone: 559-561-2707 Email: history@3rmuseum.org Website: www.3rmuseum.org

December 6: 40th Annual Senior Christmas Dinner, 1:30pm
Parks & Leisure Services, along with the generous support of community sponsors, will host Porterville's 40th annual Senior Christmas Dinner on December 6. The evening will include a turkey dinner with all the fixings catered by Randy's Bistro. Guests can also dance the night away to special musical entertainment provided by Jim Kusserow and the Fabulous Studio Band. There will also be door prizes and a special visit from Santa Claus. The festivities take place at Burton Middle School from 2-5pm; doors open at 1:30pm. Tickets for the event are on sale for only $10 and can be purchased at the Heritage Center, 256 E. Orange Avenue, or at the Parks and Leisure office in City Hall. Space is limited so advanced ticket purchase is advised. For more information call (559) 791-7695 or visit the City's website at www.ci.porterville.ca.us.

December 6: Christmas Devotional, 5pm
Enjoy Christmas music by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and inspiring Christ-centered messages from leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at the annual Christmas Devo-

tional. The devotional, broadcast from Salt Lake City, begins at 5pm on Sunday, December 6 at the LDS Chapel at 650 N Lovers Lane in Visalia. The broadcast will be followed by a children's choir, a congregational Christmas carol sing-along, and homemade cookies and eggnog. This free event is open to all members of the community. For more information, please contact Julie Darnell at (559) 804-4506 or at juliedarnell.pa@gmail.com.

eals by taking this three-hour class at PC.
e everyone, including hot soups, desserts and appetizers.

er 11 from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm
oin, potato cakes, and pineapple mousse

er 18 from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm
ple strudel, and crème brulee

Instructor: Chef Pierce Thomas • Cost: $35

ATION REQUIRED:
• Space is limited. Register Today! • no parking permit required
ervillecollege.edu

December 7: College of the Sequoias Great Books Discussion Group, 4-5:30pm
The group meets second and fourth Mondays monthly in the COS campus' Hospital Rock 133 room in front of the Book Store, just SE of Kern. Tonight's topic: Carl Jung, "The Stages of Life"

December 9: Way Back Wednesdays--Classic Flicks at the Fox, 7pm
On the second Wednesday monthly through April, 2016, the Visalia Fox Theatre presents a classic film. Admission is $5 and includes a small popcorn. Tonight: Gremlins, 1984.

December 11: Exeter Woman's Club 5th Annual Christmas Home Tour, 4-8pm
Exeter Woman's Club 5th Annual Christmas Home Tour. This year's event will be on Friday, December 11th from 4 to 8pm. Tickets are $20 each and can be purchased at the Exeter Woman's Club at 201 N. Kaweah or at the Exeter Chamber of Commerce at 101 W Pine Street. For more information, call (559) 799-3641.

December 11: Merri-Achi Christmas, 7:30pm
Enjoy a fusion of the traditional holiday spirit with the color, and the traditions, of Mexican and American Christmas songs and carols. The traditions are brought to life by Sol de Mexico's spectacular artistic execution. Experience this unique fiesta of favorite holiday tunes from both sides of the border. At the Visalia Fox Theatre.

December 11: Visalia Chamber Annual Christmas Tree Auction
The 35th Annual Christmas Tree Auction will have a Champagne Jubilee theme. Known as 'THE Formal Event of the season', the Christmas Tree Auction committee is excited that this year's theme will raise the elegance of an already magical evening. Building on the success of last year, the event will once again be held on the second Friday in December, and looks to again raise nearly a quarter of a million dollars for local charities. VIP tickets and General Admission tickets will grant attendees access to the Champagne Jubilee themed event on December 11, 2015 at the Visalia Convention Center.

The Christmas Tree Auction is the only formal event open to the public in the city. From a sit down dinner, to dancing, entertainment, and wine tasting this is an event not to be missed. This year attendees have the choice to attend the Christmas Tree Auction on a General Admission ticket or as VIP Guest. General admission includes: wine tasting, hors d'oeuvres, the live large tree and silent auction, dessert & dancing. The VIP ticket includes: a sit down dinner, live large tree auction, wine tasting, hors d'oeuvres, silent auction, dessert & dancing. Tickets will be available online after September 8th at www.visaliachamber.org Don't miss the chance to generously support the work of local non-profits and kick off the holiday season with the most festive party in town. Sponsorship opportunities for the Christmas Tree Auction are available for interested businesses, call the Chamber at 559-734-5876 for details.

December 12: "Just Walk" With a Doc, 8-9am
The Healthy Visalia Committee working in partnership with Kaweah Delta Health Care District, Family HealthCare Network, Tulare County Medical Society and the Visalia Parks and Recreation Dept. continues its 2015 Visalia's "Just Walk" With a Doc walking program. The walks will take place at Blain Park, 3101 S. Court St., in Visalia.

December 12: Lindcove Research & Extension Center Citrus Fruit Display & Tasting, 9am-Noon
Taste more than 100 citrus varieties that are grown at Lindcove. Citrus enthusiasts can get answers to their questions about citrus horticulture and pest management at the Master Gardener booth as well as from UC Extension personnel. Directions: From Visalia take Highway 198 east to Mehrten Drive (Approximately 15 miles) and follow the signs. Location Education Building at 22963 Carson Avenue, Exeter. The Education Building is located at the end of Carson Avenue on the right.

December 12: 21st Annual London Christmas Parade, 1pm
The parade commences at 37835 Kate Road in London and features the Tulare County Prevention Coalition's Michelle Reynoso as Grand Marshall.

December 12: 2nd Annual Woodlake Christmas Parade, 7pm
Contact The Homegrown Project (559) 804-5203, (559) 909-2932

December 19-22: Beginning Horse Camp, 1-3:30pm each day
At Wood N Horse Training Stables, 42846 North Fork Dr, Three Rivers, CA 93271. Topics will cover history, safety, feeding, medical care, grooming, how to put a saddle on and riding each day plus lots more! Ages are 7 – 77! For more info please call 559-561-4268. Instructor is World Champion trainer, exhibitor and horse show judge, and author, Christy Wood.

December 22: Opening the College Door, 9am-2pm
Porterville College is inviting the public to participate in "Opening the College Door: A College Transition Workshop" Saturday, December 5 at Porterville College. This FREE conference will provide information and resources about community college and support services for students with learning and other disabilities.

Presentations will focus on using technology to improve executive functioning, increasing campus social connections, the importance of self-advocacy, and planning the transition from high school to college. Registration will be at www.portervillecollege.edu. Porterville College is located at 100 East College Avenue in Porterville. For more information call (559) 791-2200 or visit www.portervillecollege.edu.

December 31: Exeter's New Year's Eve Doo-Dah Parade and Free Fireworks Show, 6pm
Exeter's New Year's Eve Celebration and Doo-Dah Parade is Thursday, December 31st. The celebration starts off at 6pm with the Doo-Dah Parade on Pine Street followed by a FREE fireworks show at 9 pm provided by the Exeter Lion's Club.

There will be entertainment, bounce house, petting zoo, face painting, train rides, food vendors, live band, dancing and a beer garden. For sponsorships and donations, call Bob Sperry at (559) 679-8906. Parade entry forms can be picked up at NSE Insurance, 160 South D Street in Exeter. For more information, call (559) 592-9411.

JANUARY

January 1: Bank of the Sierra's Rockin' Resolution Run, 7:30am
Bank of the Sierra is pleased to announce its continued partnership with the Visalia Rescue Mission to help enhance the quality of life for Central Valley citizens in need. Runners and walkers are welcome for a 5k through Downtown Visalia. A 1 mile Kids Race will kick-off the festivities. Local bands will perform along the course to keep you motivated! Show up in costume -- the top three favorites will win a prize! Start the New Year off on the right foot...get fit & support our local community!

Sports

Pirates Battle Forward Despite Kirkland Loss

Stefan Barros

The Porterville College 2015-16 Men's Basketball Team. Courtesy/Porterville College

The Porterville College Men's Basketball team is just getting its 2015-16 campaign underway. Head Coach Rob Haynes has some expectations for his team to make a little bit of noise this season. His team has already been dealt a tough blow though, losing star big man Dale Kirkland for the season to a torn ACL in this knee.

Haynes admits that this loss does change some things for the team, and other players will have to step and contribute, "Dale was the anchor of our defense, but we're going to need the next man up. Guys are going to get more reps than they expected coming into the season. We can't replace him, but we can put in the effort as a team and make up for his loss that way."

Haynes believes in his team, and expects them to be good this year, "Dale's injury took a crucial part out, but we're still good enough to make things happen. We'll just have to rally together and make something of the season."

Haynes believes his team has played well, but needs to play to win during the entire game, and not just a half.

"I've been disappointed in the way we start games," he said. "We get hit first. I need to do a better job of getting guys fired before the game. The guys have fought in games though. We've been down early in five of our six games and we've either come back to win, or lose by one or two points. We can finish, we just haven't started off the way we are capable of."

Being down a player, Haynes has a few guys he is looking at to step up and provide for the team.

"There are few guys that we'll look to, and we're guard heavy, Travis Flagg is one," he said. "He's our point guard and is averaging 12 points and three assists a game. Tyler Roberts is one of our best scorers and is a sharp shooter off the bench averaging 13 points a game. That's really good for someone coming off the bench."

Haynes went on to explain that, while Kirkland was one of their more valuable players, he wasn't relied upon for offense, so that part of his game will not need to be replaced, "Dale wasn't a scorer, he was the muscle for us in the paint."

Coming off of a seven-win season, Haynes believes that this team is improved from last year's team, though this team does have some flaws, "We just need to play hard. If we do that we can be one of the top defensive teams. Last year we were top 10 in the state. We wanted to stay healthy going into conference play and give the top teams in the CVC (Central Valley Conference) a run for their money."

Also in comparing last year's team to this year's, Haynes believes that this team is much more equipped to survive without a top player, than they were last year, "Last year, we were limited. Dale's loss is hard, but it would've meant more last year. During last season we went through droughts on offense. Sometimes three or four minutes without scoring. We played defense, but you can only do that for so long."

Continuing on the theme of comparing last season to this season, Haynes appreciates the overall ability of this year's team after admitting the team last season was limited, "We're more talented this year. Whether or not we're better, I don't know yet. The basketball IQ is higher for this team. Also last year, we were a pressing team on defense, and this year we're a zone team. But each guy on this team can score; we really struggled scoring last year. We've struggled scoring this year, but not to that extent."

As far as the rest of the season is concerned, Haynes doesn't really want to set long-term goals for the team. He wants to take things a little more slowly, "We'll play the season as it goes. Take it a game at a time. We're not setting any goals yet. We just want to play better every game at this point."

The Porterville Pirates, who currently stand with a 2-4 record, will play again on Friday, December 4 in the Cabrillo Classic vs. Deanza College at 5pm. The next game at Porterville College, will be on Friday, December 11 vs. Allen Hancock College. Game time is at 6pm.

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Health

Kaweah Delta Lead Discussion in National Webinar

Staff Reports

On, Friday, November 20, the Kaweah Delta infection prevention team and clinic partners were invited to contribute as presenters during a Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Webinar. Kaweah Delta has seen a significant reduction in the rate of catheter-associated urinary tract infections (CAUTIs). In addition, reduction in central line-associated blood stream infection (CLABSI) via prevention strategies has made Kaweah Delta a lead in preventing hospital acquired infections. The webinar is geared to gathering health quality experts, clinicians, and consumers to improve the care delivered to people with Medicare.

"We have created a webinar series entitled 'Improving Patient Safety' that highlights hospitals that have had success in improving their safety measure rates in the Hospital Value-Based Purchasing Program" stated Kristen Lea Woodruff, Hospital Inpatient VIQR Outreach and Education Support Program. "We choose your hospital because [Kaweah Delta] improved its Fiscal Year 2016 CAUTI Standard Infection Ratio (SIR) from the baseline period to the performance period by a substantial amount while maintaining a positive Total Performance Score (TPS). We would like to applaud your efforts and congratulate you and your hospital in the success of those efforts!"

"Kaweah Delta has made significant inroads in reducing the rate of CAUTIs and CLABSIs" said Lindsay Mann, Chief Executive Officer for Kaweah Delta Health Care District. "Our infection prevention committees have implemented and executed a prominent model of intervention. It is an honor to be recognized at a national level and given a platform to share with other hospitals around the nation our current strategies. We will continue to provide top quality healthcare, and lead in reducing the risk of hospital acquired infections."

Participants of the webinar learned more about prevention strategies including scrupulous hand hygiene, dedicated dressing/cap days, use of aseptic technique with changes, and daily review of line necessity with physicians.

"We normally participate as listeners during webinars, but this honor gave us the opportunity to share our improvements and lead the discussion on effective protocols in infection prevention" said Melissa A. Janes, Infection Prevention Manager at Kaweah Delta Health Care District. "Over 2500 people were in attendance and we were very proud to represent Kaweah Delta on a national level."

Hospital Admissions Drop, Air Quality Improves with Wood Burning Restrictions

Staff Reports

Reductions in both fine particulate pollution (PM2.5) and cardiovascular hospitalizations were seen in the San Joaquin Valley after a 'Check-Before-You-Burn' regulation was fully implemented in that air basin, Air Resources Board research has found.

ARB's research examined the effectiveness of San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District Rule 4901, fully implemented in 2003, at reducing PM2.5 and cardiovascular hospitalizations in the valley air basin. During winter, PM2.5 is a health problem in the San Joaquin Valley - and many parts of California. Wood burning regulations, like Rule 4901, are in effect in many air districts during the burn season from November 1 through February to reduce emissions of PM2.5 and carbon monoxide from residential wood burning.

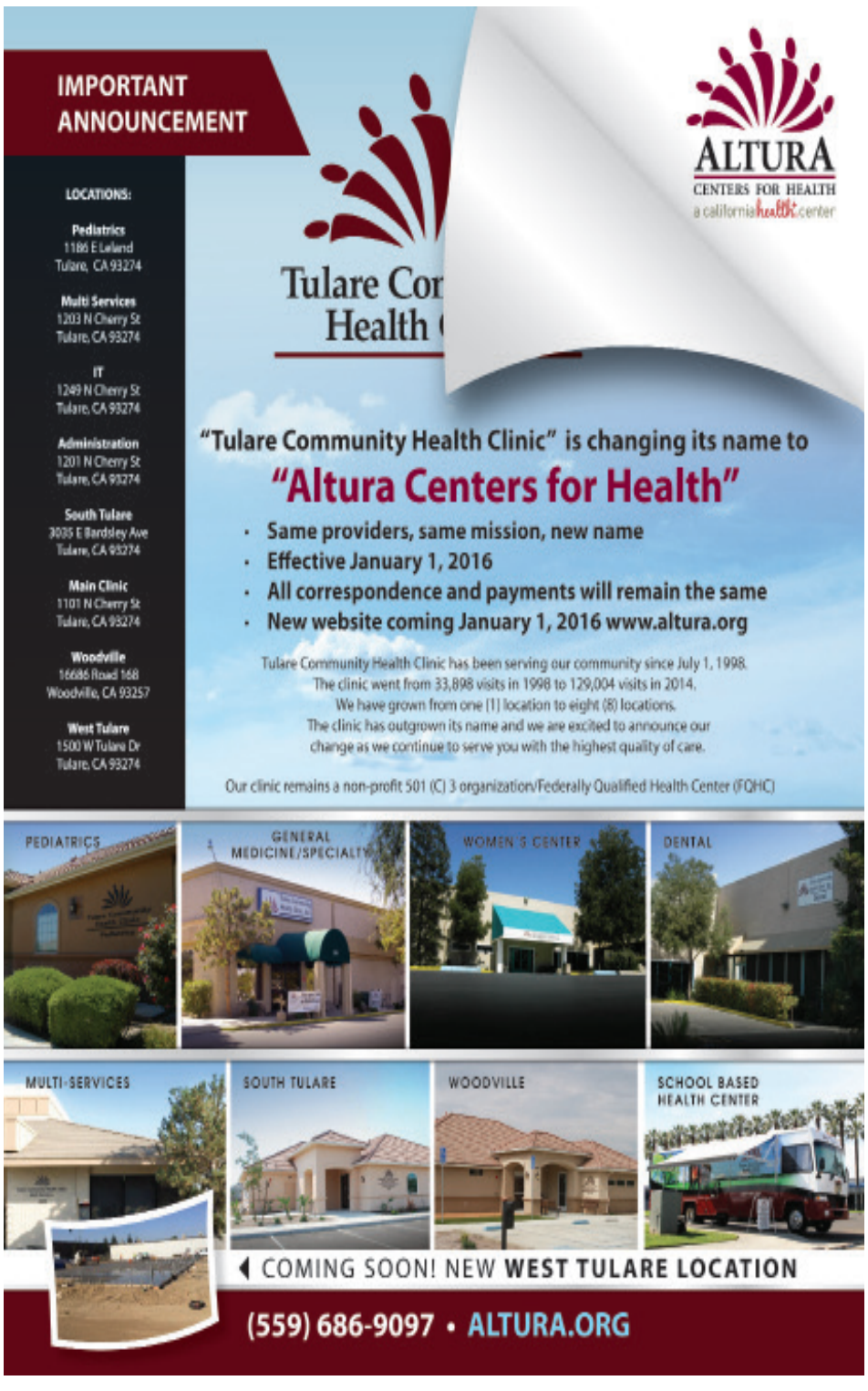
"ARB's research provides evidence that these 'check-before-you-burn' programs, combined with public education, are helping to reduce harmful wintertime air pollution and protect public health," Chair Mary D. Nichols said.

The San Joaquin Valley's Rule 4901 requires mandatory curtailment of residential wood burning when air quality is forecast to be poor - an air quality index of 150 or greater during the wood burning season. The ARB study found that after the implementation of the wood burning regulation in the San Joaquin Valley in the winter:

- PM2.5 was reduced by 12% basin-wide and by 11% and 15% in rural and urban regions of the basin, respectively.
- Larger, coarse particulate matter was reduced 8% basin-wide and in rural (7%) and urban (11%) areas of the basin.
- The number of hospital admissions for all types of cardiovascular disease in adults 65 and older dropped by 7% basin-wide. In addition, hospitalizations for ischemic heart disease, a specific type of cardiovascular disease often known as coronary artery disease, dropped by 16% basin-wide.

The San Joaquin Valley historically has had some of the worst air quality in the nation, and solid fuel combustion - burning wood, manufactured logs and pellets in fireplaces and wood stoves -- has been identified as the largest individual source of particulate matter during winter months.

Emitted when solid fuels, such as wood, are burned, PM2.5 can penetrate deep into the lungs and have been linked to serious health impacts. Health studies have found that long-term exposure to PM2.5 can be linked to premature death from heart and lung diseases and reduced lung function growth in children.



Dinosaurs are on display at Global Wonderland. Courtesy/Global Wonderland

Dinosaur Maze Becomes a Hit at Global Wonderland

Staff Reports

Global Wonderland's Dinosaur Maze has fast become a kid's seasonal favorite at the event which is being held at the Tulare County Fairgrounds for the first time this year.

The 20,000-square-foot maze includes 12 dinosaurs from rubberized life-sized creatures to those made of silk with lanterns, designed by GW's artists.

These prehistoric creatures include interactive displays inserted into intricate pathways providing a maze that is a world of fun. With extravagantly color, these man-made dinosaur giants delight the children as they make your way through exciting maze challenge.

The Dinosaur Maze is located near the main entrance of GW at the fairgrounds and is only a small part of the enchanting lighted display of some of the world's most noted landmarks including the Taj Mahal, St. Basil's Cathedral, London's Big Ben, as well as a Christmas House and Gingerbread House.

Circus of Light performers will take the stage at 6 and 8 pm nightly. Entertainment is part of the entry ticket price. This unique circus features performers from around the globe including acrobats, jugglers, fire dancers and contortionists.

Food fits the theme, with food vendors offering a variety of food from around the world, and there is even holiday shopping with original gifts and crafts. Santa has arranged his schedule to be there along with a few of his elves.

The World of Lights is open Friday-Sunday, December 4-6, and December 11-13; and again daily Friday, December 18-Sunday, January 3. Hours are 4:30 – 10pm Monday – Thursday, 3 – 11pm Friday and Saturday, and 3 – 10pm Sundays.

Admission is $16 for adults, $12 or seniors (60+) and children (4-12), children under 4 are free. Unlimited ride wristbands are $25. A season pass with ride wristbands is $40 for adults and $35 for children. Parking is $5.

For more information visit, www.globalwonderland.com or call, (510) 962-8586.

Opening the College Door

Staff Reports

Registration is still open for the upcoming one day conference, "Opening the College Door: A College Transition Workshop" from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 12 at Porterville College. This event is free and open to the public.

The transition from school to adulthood is pivotal in the lives of all students. For a student with a disability, the transition from high school to the world of adulthood can seem overwhelming.

Joseph Polizzotto. Courtesy/Porterville College

However, with thoughtful planning, this transition can lead to postsecondary opportunities and meaningful employment.

The keynote speaker will be Joseph Polizzotto, High Tech Specialist and Learning Skills Associate Professor at Taft College. Polizzotto teaches learning skills courses and trains students in assistive technologies. He has over 10 years of teaching experience at post-secondary schools in California and regularly gives presentations and webinars on assistive technology and alternate media.

Joseph is a consultant for Kurzweil Education and Sonocent, two of the leaders in assistive technology. He is also a member of the advisory board for the High Tech Center Training Unit (HTCTU) of the California community colleges and currently serves as a co-chair of the access technology interest group for the California Post-secondary Education and Disability (CAPED) professional organization.

This FREE conference will provide information and resources about community college and support services for students with learning and other disabilities. Presentations will focus on using technology to improve executive functioning, increasing campus social connections, the importance of self-advocacy, and planning the transition from high school to college.

Parents, young adults, college faculty, high school teachers and service providers should attend. Registration available at www.portervillecollege.edu/event/opening-college-door.

Porterville College is located at 100 East College Avenue in Porterville. For more information call (559) 791-2200 or visit www.portervillecollege.edu.